

IS ISRAEL AN APARTHEID STATE?

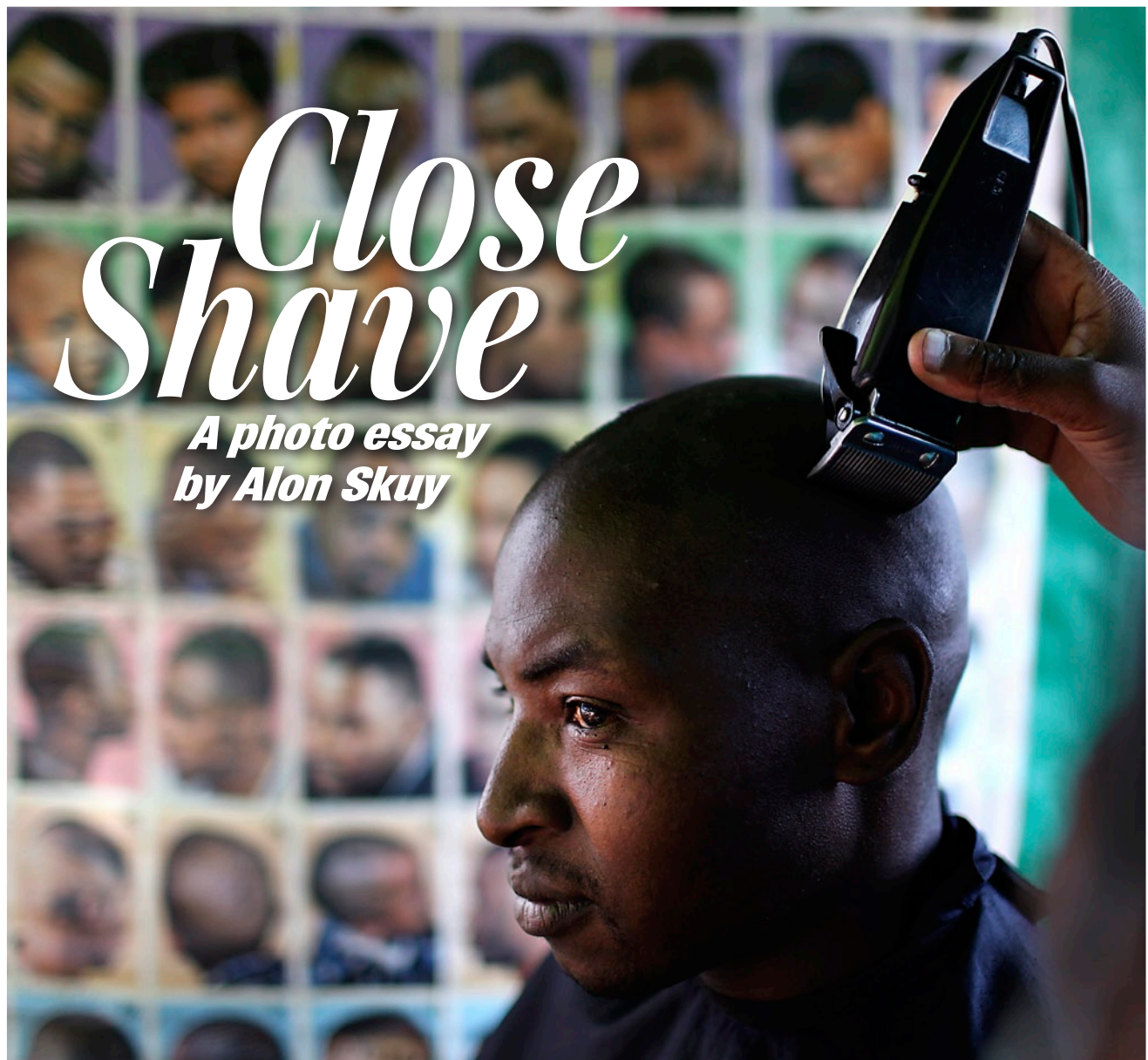
NO, SAYS URI AVNERY

YES, SAYS JONATHAN COOK

ColdType

WRITING WORTH READING

ISSUE 79



Close Shave

*A photo essay
by Alon Skuy*

PLUS – BIG EXCERPTS FROM NEW BOOKS ON JOHN LENNON IN THE USA AND THE ABOLITION OF WAR

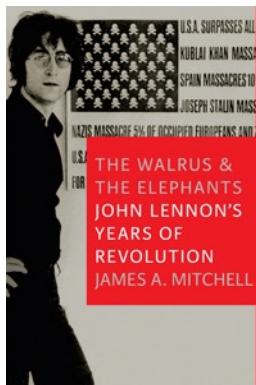


Cover: Alon Skuy
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Journalist or activist?

David Edwards on the media's smearing of Glenn Greenwald

Modern thought control is dependent on subliminal communication. Messages influencing key perceptions are delivered unseen, unnoticed, with minimal public awareness of what is happening or why.

For example, journalists tell us that Hugo Chavez was 'divisive', that Julian Assange and Edward Snowden are 'narcissistic', that George Galloway is 'controversial'. But beneath their literal meaning, these adjectives communicate a hidden message: that these individuals are acceptable targets for negative media judgement; they are fair game.

By contrast, Barack Obama is never described as 'controversial' or 'divisive'. David Cameron is not a 'rightist prime minister'. Why? Because the rules of professional journalism are said to ensure that journalists serve democracy by remaining objective and impartial. Reporters are merely to describe, not to judge, the words and actions of leading politicians.

Crucially, this deference is afforded only to political actors deemed 'mainstream', 'respectable'. By implication, individuals subject to media judgement are presented as outsiders, beyond the democratic pale.

In the *Times* on October 10, David Aaronovitch compared *Guardian* editor Alan Rusbridger with *Guardian* columnist Glenn Greenwald:

'Rusbridger may be a "proper" journalist (and he certainly is), someone like Greenwald is first and foremost an activist. He wants above all to change the world, not just to report it. So while we might trust Rusbridger, what reason do we have for trusting Greenwald with top secret GCHQ information? Or his Brazilian boyfriend who could have been going anywhere and given the stuff on his computer to anybody.'

Aaronovitch thus painted a large, lurid label on Greenwald's back: 'activist'. He is to be seen as a pseudo-journalist, an amateur, a loose cannon. Rusbridger is a 'proper' journalist, Greenwald is not.

The repeated references to Greenwald's 'Brazilian boyfriend', who 'could have been going anywhere', were also intended to depict Greenwald as a shambolic, non-serious figure in journalism. So, too, the attempts to associate Greenwald with the US politician Ron Paul, whose politics 'are way out there' (see Greenwald's response below). For good measure, Aaronovitch described Edward Snowden as a 'fugitive', as though referring to an escaped convict rather than a principled and courageous whistle-blower.

The myth that 'proper' journalism seeks merely to report, not to change, the world is debunked by the mythologist himself.

In 1999, as Nato bombs blitzed Serbia, Aaronovitch wrote in the *Independent*:

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The willingness to fight and die as part of a foreign military campaign is the ultimate form of 'activism'. We are not aware that Greenwald has ever threatened to invade a foreign country
.....

'Is this cause, the cause of the Kosovar Albanians, a cause that is worth suffering for?... Would I fight, or (more realistically) would I countenance the possibility that members of my family might die?'

His answer: 'I think so.' (Aaronovitch, 'My country needs me,' the *Independent*, April 6, 1999)

The willingness to fight and die as part of a foreign military campaign is the ultimate form of 'activism'. We are not aware that Greenwald has ever threatened to invade a foreign country.

In February 2003, Aaronovitch declared of Saddam Hussein:

'I want him out, for the sake of the region (and therefore, eventually, for our sakes), but most particularly for the sake of the Iraqi people who cannot lift this yoke on their own.' (Aaronovitch, 'Why the Left must tackle the crimes of Saddam: With or without a second UN resolution, I will not oppose action against Iraq,' the *Observer*, February 2, 2003)

Were these not the words of someone who aspires 'above all to change the world, not just to report it'?

The title of Aaronovitch's *Times* piece smearing Greenwald was also purest activism.

'Beware: a dangerous new generation of leakers; The threat to security services from tech-savvy young anti-government "libertarians" looks to be serious'

Greenwald commented to Media Lens on the article:

'The position he attributed to me about Ron Paul is an outright fabrication, accomplished through an obvious manipulation of quotation marks.

'The *Times* allowed him to tell readers that I said "Paul was... 'the only major presidential candidate' to say the right things on the questions that really mattered." Not only did I not say that, but I said the opposite.

'I wrote that Paul was better than Obama/Dems on some key issues, but that Obama/

Dems were better than Paul on other key issues for progressives. For that reason, I wrote, "it's perfectly rational and reasonable for progressives to decide that the evils of their candidate are outweighed by the evils of the GOP candidate, whether Ron Paul or anyone else."

'He accomplished his fabrication by quoting a small snippet of what I wrote (that Paul was "the only major presidential candidate"' saying the right things on some issues), and then fabricated something I did not say ("on the questions that really mattered") and lopped it onto the actual quote. That fabrication was all in service of making it appear that I said something that I not only did not say, but explicitly repudiated, including in the first dozen or so paragraphs of the piece he referenced.

'That's to say nothing of the hilarious, inane irony of having someone who publicly cheered for the worst political crime of this generation – the attack on Iraq – trying to deny other people "journalist" status on the ground that they seek to "change the world" rather than simply report.

'Also, did he step out of 1958? What kind of drooling troglodyte still uses the trivializing term "boyfriend" to refer to gay men in an 8-year spousal relationship?

'But all you need to know about this paper's journalistic standards is that it prints rank, idiotic, false speculation such as this: "Presumably [Miranda] was taking [the documents], via intermediaries, from Snowden in Moscow to Greenwald in Rio". If you're beginning a sentence with "presumably" and then following it with a profoundly serious accusation that lacks any evidence, you may be many things. "Journalist" is most definitely not among them.' (Glenn Greenwald to Media Lens, October 11, 2013)

.....
'Changing the mood music of British politics' – activism?

The idea that 'proper' journalism is divinely indifferent to human affairs is also mocked

by the fact that proprietors are notoriously keen to use their positions, their investment, to influence politics and economics. This is not only understood, it is celebrated, and not just on the right of the 'mainstream'. In the *New Statesman* last month, Jonn Elledge argued:

'What socially conscious journalism needs, then, is a benefactor: a wealthy left-winger who's willing to step in and support it, not because they think it'll make them any money but because they want to help shape the debate. By buying one of the more poisonous tabloids, this person could *refashion its message* about, oh I don't know, single mothers and benefit claimants, perhaps?' (My emphasis)

Clearly, the thought that journalism should be neutral, that proprietors should leave journalism to journalists, has never crossed Elledge's mind. Instead, his plea was precisely that J.K. Rowling – wealthy author of the Harry Potter books – should shape a newspaper to change the world.

Elledge pointed out that 'owning' a newspaper 'is pretty unlikely to bankrupt her. And it would give her a far greater chance of *changing the mood music* of British politics than the occasional article ever could.

'So, Ms Rowling – how about it?' (My emphasis)

And consider Elledge's own magazine. In 2009, the *Guardian* reported:

'Mike Danson has taken full control of the *New Statesman*, the leftwing political weekly, buying out the Labour MP Geoffrey Robinson's 50% stake in the title.'

Danson made a multimillion-pound fortune when he sold his information business Datamonitor, and 'played a key role in hiring the *New Statesman*'s editor, Jason Cowley... [who] has recruited new writers and plans to extend the scope of the magazine'.

In other words, the owner chooses the editor who chooses the journalists – people like Elledge – giving the boss 'a far greater chance of changing the mood music of British politics'.

This makes a nonsense of freedom-fighting activist Aaronovitch's notion of 'proper' journalism.

On the same theme, the Marxist thinker Ralph Miliband observed that 'Most newspapers' are 'agencies of legitimation and organs of conservative propaganda' operating under key constraints:

'The first and most important of these constraints is that newspapers are part of capitalist enterprise – not only business but big business... [A] second important constraint is that newspapers are part of the world of business in a different sense as well, namely in the sense that they depend on the custom of advertisers.

'Proprietors may or may not choose to exercise direct influence on their newspapers; and the direct influence of advertisers may not in any case be substantial. But the fact that newspapers are an intrinsic part of the world of business fosters a strong climate of orthodoxy for the people who work in them. So does the concern of editors and senior journalists to maintain good relations with government and ministers, civil servants, and other important people in the political and administrative establishment.

'These constraints, however, do no great violence to the people actually in charge of newspapers and occupying influential positions in the journalistic hierarchy, simply because most of them, notwithstanding the unbuttoned and "populist" style which much of the newspaper world affects, share the assumptions and outlook of the world of business and government. The overwhelming chances are that they would not come to occupy the positions they hold if they did not.' (Ralph Miliband, *Capitalist Democracy In Britain*, Oxford University Press, 1982, re-published 1988, pp.84-6).

For espousing views of this kind, Miliband – father of Labour leader, Ed Miliband – was smeared as 'The man who hated Britain' by the *Daily Mail*. His ideas 'should disturb everyone who loves this country'.

The *Mail* article generated an awesome

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level of liberal outrage. Counter-critics pointed out that *Daily Mail* proprietor Lord Rothermere had written to Adolf Hitler in June 1939:

'My Dear Führer, I have watched with understanding and interest the progress of your great and superhuman work in regenerating your country...'

In reality, the *Mail* article was a foolish and trivial attempt to smear Ed Miliband with his father's views. The level of liberal outrage mainly demonstrated the ability of the Labourite left to defend its own.

The Lexis media database records 269 hits for UK newspapers mentioning 'Ralph Miliband' and the '*Daily Mail*' over the last month, the file of hits extending to some 600 pages in length. We have also seen many hundreds of outraged comments on Twitter from virtually every vaguely left-liberal journalist.

By contrast, Lexis finds zero hits mentioning Aaronovitch's far more serious attack on Greenwald, a courageous, compassionate journalist facing severe threats from US-UK state power, whose partner has already suffered state harassment, whose home has been burgled, and so on.

Contrary to Aaronovitch's version of 'proper' journalism, establishment media are only too willing to intervene to protect their interests in this way. They do, however, regularly respond with serene equanimity when dissidents and Official Enemies are under attack.

.....
Baron Finkelstein – and other activist monsters

Peter Osborne writes in the *Spectator* that Aaronovitch's colleague at the *Times*, Lord Finkelstein, 'is close to the Prime Minister':

'Lord Finkelstein is, however, closer by far to George Osborne. One senior *Times* writer told me three years ago that he spoke "six or seven times a day, probably more" to the Chancellor. Mr Osborne once reportedly remarked that he spoke to Mr Finkelstein

more often than he did to his wife.'

Osborne supplies some background:

'One insider told me that "what Danny writes today George thinks tomorrow". This is a reversal of the normal order of precedence, whereby articles by journalists reflect what they have been told by politicians. But Mr Finkelstein is the intellectual and moral superior (and former boss) of the Chancellor, and informed people know that.'

Is Finkelstein, then, a journalist or an activist? Osborne concludes:

'As any newspaperman will recognise, Daniel Finkelstein has never in truth been a journalist at all. At the *Times* he was an ebullient and cheerful manifestation of what all of us can now recognise as a disastrous collaboration between Britain's most powerful media empire and a morally bankrupt political class.'

This outing of a journalist as an activist is rare indeed.

But the true surrealism of Aaronovitch's criticism of Greenwald was exposed this month when the Public Accountability Initiative (PAI) published a report indicating the extent to which the corporate media habitually pass off gross bias as neutral commentary.

PAI noted how one US media commentator, Stephen Hadley, had 'argued strenuously for military intervention' in Syria in appearances on CNN, MSNBC, Fox News, and Bloomberg TV. He had also authored a *Washington Post* op-ed headlined, 'To stop Iran, Obama must enforce red lines with Assad.'

PAI supplied some background:

'In each case, Hadley's audience was not informed that he serves as a director of Raytheon, the weapons manufacturer that makes the Tomahawk cruise missiles that were widely cited as a weapon of choice in a potential strike against Syria. Hadley earns \$128,500 in annual cash compensation from the company and chairs its public affairs committee. He also owns 11,477 shares of Raytheon stock, which traded at all-time

highs during the Syria debate (\$77.65 on August 23, making Hadley's share's worth \$891,189). Despite this financial stake, Hadley was presented to his audience as an experienced, independent national security expert.'

Hadley was also Assistant to George W. Bush and Deputy National Security Advisor from January 22, 2001. In 2002, Hadley was a member of the discredited White House Iraq Group, set up in August 2002 to sell the Iraq war to the American public.

Corporate media are packed with corporate activists of this kind. Often these commentators are employed by 'think tanks' carefully designed and named to appear impartial. PAI comments:

'The report profiles seven prominent think tanks with significant industry ties that weighed in on intervention in Syria... The Brookings Institution's commentary on intervention in Syria was cited in 31 articles... Brookings's corporate donors include some prominent names in the defense industry.'

These include:

\$1 million - 2.5 million: Booz Allen Hamilton

\$500,000 - 1 million: Qualcomm Inc.

\$50,000 - 100,000: Boeing, General Dynamics, Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman, Palantir Technologies.

In January 2012, Shadi Hamid, director of research at the Brookings Doha Centre, wrote in the *Atlantic*: 'I was an early supporter of military intervention in Libya. I called for a no-fly zone on February 23, just

8 days after protests began.'

He continued:

'The international community must begin considering a variety of military options - the establishment of "safe zones" seems the most plausible - and determine which enjoys the highest likelihood of causing more good than harm. This is now - after nearly a year of waiting and hoping - the right thing to do. It is also the responsible thing to do.'

Finally, we can recognise that BBC grandee and world affairs editor, John Simpson, is certainly deemed a journalist - Aaronsvitch would not dream of suggesting otherwise. And yet Simpson commented recently:

'The US is still the world's biggest economic and military power, but it seems to have lost the sense of moral mission that caused it to intervene everywhere from Vietnam to Iraq...'

Was this endorsement of the claim that the US has been on a 'moral mission' a form of activism? It is interesting to consider an alternative formulation:

'The US seems to have retained the sense of ruthless, profit-driven moral indifference that caused it to intervene everywhere from Vietnam to Iraq...'

If this version of history reads like activism, why not Simpson's? **CT**

David Edwards is co-editor of Medialens, the British media watchdog, at whose website - <http://medialens.org> - this essay was first published

Corporate media are packed with corporate activists. Often these commentators are employed by 'think tanks' carefully designed and named to appear impartial



More misinformation from the Fox gang

Michael I. Niman looks inside Murdoch's strange universe

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The report reads that oceans are getting warmer faster than expected, while the atmosphere is warming a bit slower than expected
.....

When I saw the Sept 17 *Wall Street Journal* headline, “A Reprieve from Climate Doom: A forthcoming report dials back the alarm on global warming,” I hoped against all odds this was a credible, evidence-based story and not just another piece of well-placed oil industry PR. Skimming down to paragraph three, I learned that a forthcoming report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the world’s most respected international body of climate scientists, “points to the very real possibility that, over the next several generations, the overall effect of climate change will be positive for humankind and the planet.” Wow. If only the Fox News universe was real, life could be grand.

Counting paid digital subscriptions, the *Journal* has the largest circulation of any newspaper in the United States. Once a credible respected conservative newspaper of record, it moved into the Fox universe in 2007 when Rupert Murdoch’s News Corporation purchased its parent corporation, Dow Jones. Today’s *Wall Street Journal* is nothing more than an upscale version of its sister News Corp. publication, the *New York Post*.

But really, I wanted this one story to be true – to be accurate like the stock market numbers the paper publishes. Unlike most web surfers who seldom graze a page for more than 45 seconds, or newspaper readers who rarely venture beyond the fifth paragraph,

I read on. The further I read, however, the more the story twisted and turned, struggling to make a credible case out of select factoids ripped from their scientific context.

When the IPCC finally released its report on September 27, it reported a climate reality in sharp contrast to the *Wall Street Journal*’s fairytale. The *Los Angeles Times*’s Sept 27 headline read, “Experts set threshold for climate-change calamity: Researchers say an emissions tipping point for the planet may be 25 years away.” The *Times* reported that the IPCC has raised its level of certainty that global warming is the result of human carbon emissions from 90 to 95 percent, citing a co-author of the study who warns that the fate of humanity is tied to whether or not we can cut carbon emissions in the next few years. According to the IPCC report, “Human influence has been detected in warming of the atmosphere and the ocean, in changes in the global water cycle, in reductions in snow and ice, in global mean sea level rise, and in changes in some climate extremes.”

This is the part of the report that the Fox universe seized upon. The report reads that oceans are getting warmer faster than expected, while the atmosphere is warming a bit slower than expected, with the end result confirming the accuracy of overall planetary warming predictions. Aside from acting as a heat sink, warming oceans threaten a plethora of environmental consequences on their

own. And the scientific consensus warns that their function as a heat sink will be short-lived, with a warmer ocean eventually accelerating atmospheric warming, keeping long-term predictions for catastrophic atmospheric warming on course.

But enough with the actual science – that seems to be the Fox universe strategy, as they downplayed or ignored the warming ocean, focusing instead on the “good news” on the warming atmosphere. Picture a news story celebrating the fact that firefighters extinguished an attic fire, while not reporting that the basement is still burning out of control.

Of course the Fox universe climate stories are polished with an academic veneer, often either authored by (as in a Sept 26 piece) or citing climate expert Marlo Lewis, PhD. Little known to Fox universe readers and viewers is that Lewis’s prestigious Harvard PhD is in government, with a related BA in political science. Like myself, he has no training or expertise in climate science. He is employed by the Competitive Enterprise Institute (CEI), which is funded by ExxonMobile, Texaco, the American Petroleum Institute, the Koch Brothers, and a host of coal and oil interests, among other mostly corporate players. It is one of the main public relations entities fighting to blunt climate change/global warming awareness. Among the few credentials CEI cites for Lewis are his publications in the Unification Church (Moonie) owned *Washington Times* and appearances on Rush Limbaugh and G. Gordon Liddy’s radio programs, as well as a stint as visiting assistant professor of political science at Claremont McKenna College.

When the IPCC report was released, the national news cycle was focused not on the threats of climate apocalypse, but instead on the pop-up political circus surrounding the congressional fight on whether or not to force the US government to default on its bills and shut down major operations. At this crucial juncture in human history our media was focused on Texas Senator Ted Cruz reading *Green Eggs and Ham* and *The Little Engine that Could* to the Senate, rather than on this

global scientific plea that our house is on fire and we must put it out. We also learned that Cruz is a fan of White Castle burgers, Ashton Kutcher, and Duck Dynasty. Meanwhile, the Fox universe launched enough climate-doom-averted memes into the news cycle to reframe the IPCC report as nothing more than another opinion, and a real bummer of one at that.

Think what you will of Fox News, but a major chunk of the population views this confusion machine as bona fide news. And few people realize that the *Wall Street Journal* brand is now a front for this machine. Add to this the little-known fact that Fox’s parent, Rupert Murdoch’s News Corp., has been in negotiations to acquire the afore cited *Los Angeles Times*, and the *Chicago Tribune* and the *Tribune* group of newspapers, and that Murdoch allies and climate change deniers, the Koch brothers, are looking at major media acquisitions as well, and we start seeing a hegemonic propaganda machine.

Looking at the scientific consensus voiced by the IPCC and a plethora of independent climate science groups, and then looking at the successful coordinated efforts of the climate-la-de-da PR machine, I just have to ask, is there an end-of-the-world lobby? The oil and coal lobbies have thwarted serious climate damage mitigation efforts since climatologists sounded the global warming alarm with an emerging consensus in the early 1970s. Now, as we are starting to see the early signs of global warming playing out before us, as we enter this end-game period of last chances to possibly avert the worst-case civilization-ending scenarios, we’re seeing ever more sophisticated climate change denial efforts.

Thin as global warming denial arguments are, they have the advantage that we want to believe them. We want to be able to continue our consumer lifestyle, driving our cars, flying our planes and burning oil to ship bottles of designer waters across the planet. We want to believe that it was all a hoax by trolls, and that the *Wall Street Journal* is correct, that this hoax-induced warming will help us grow bigger and tastier tomatoes.

CT

As we enter this end-game period of last chances to possibly avert the worst-case civilization-ending scenarios, we’re seeing ever more sophisticated climate change denial efforts

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

Elite insurgency

The real threat to the national interest comes from the rich and powerful, writes **George Monbiot**

.....
Allied to the old abuses is a newer kind of supervision: the attempts by billionaires and their lieutenants to destroy the functions of the state
.....

Subversion ain't what it used to be. Today it scarcely figures as a significant force. Nation states are threatened by something else. Superversion: an attack from above.

It takes several forms. One is familiar, but greatly enhanced by new technology: the tendency of spooks and politicians to use the instruments of state to amplify undemocratic powers. We've now learnt that even members of Britain's Cabinet and the National Security Council had no idea what GCHQ was up to. No one told them that it was developing the capacity to watch, if it chooses, everything we do online. The real enemies of state (if by state we mean the compact between citizens and those they elect) are people like the head of MI5, and Theresa May, the Home Secretary, who appears to have failed to inform her Cabinet colleagues.

Allied to the old abuses is a newer kind of supervision: the attempts by billionaires and their lieutenants to destroy the functions of the state. Note the recent shutdown in the United States. The Republicans, propelled by a Tea Party movement created by the Koch brothers and financed by a gruesome collection of multi-millionaires, have engineered what in other circumstances would be called a general strike. The difference is that the withdrawal of their labour has been im-

posed on the workers.

The narrow purpose of the strike is to prevent the distribution of wealth to poorer people, through the Affordable Care Act. The wider purpose (aside from a refusal to accept the legitimacy of a black president) is to topple the state as an effective instrument of taxation, regulation and social protection. The Koch shock troops in the Republican party seem prepared to inflict almost any damage in pursuit of this insurgency, including a US government default, which could trigger a new global financial crisis.

They do so on behalf of a class which has, in effect, seceded. It floats free of tax and the usual bonds of citizenship, jetting from one jurisdiction to another as it seeks the most favourable havens for its wealth. It removes itself so thoroughly from the life of the nation that it scarcely uses even the roads. Yet, through privatisation and outsourcing, it is capturing the public services on which the rest of us depend.

Using an unreformed political funding system to devastating effect, this superversive class demands that the state stop regulating, stop protecting, stop intervening. When this abandonment causes financial crisis, the remaining taxpayers are forced to bail out the authors of the disaster, who then stash their bonuses offshore.

One result is that those who call them-

selves conservatives and patriots appear to be deeply confused about what they are defending. In an article attacking the *Guardian* for revealing GCHQ's secret surveillance programmes, Paul Dacre, the editor of the *Daily Mail*, characterised his readers as possessing an "over-riding suspicion of the state and the People Who Know Best." Strangely, this suspicion of the state and the People Who Know Best does not appear to extend to the security services, whose assault on our freedoms Dacre was defending.

To the right-wing press and the Conservative party, patriotism means standing up to the European Union. But it also means capitulating to the United States. It's an obvious and glaring contradiction, which is almost never acknowledged, let alone explained. In reality the EU and the US have become proxies for something which transcends national boundaries. The EU stands for state control and regulation while the US represents deregulation and atomisation.

In reality, this distinction is outdated, as the handful of people who have heard of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) will appreciate. The European Commission calls it "the biggest trade deal in the world".

Its purpose is to create a single transatlantic market, in which all regulatory differences between the US and the EU are gradually removed.

It has been negotiated largely in secret. This time, they're not just trying to bring down international trade barriers, but, as the commission boasts, "to tackle barriers behind the customs border – such as differences in technical regulations, standards and approval procedures." In other words, our own laws, affecting our own people.

A document published last year by two huge industrial lobby groups – the US Chamber of Commerce and BusinessEurope – explains the partnership's aims. It

will have a "proactive requirement", directing governments to change their laws. The partnership should "put stakeholders at the table with regulators to essentially co-write regulation." Stakeholder is a euphemism for corporation.

They want it; they're getting it. New intellectual property laws that they have long demanded, but which sovereign governments have so far resisted – not least because of the mass mobilisation against the Stop Online Piracy Act and Protect IP Act in the US – are back on the table, but this time largely inaccessible to public protest. So are data protection, public procurement and financial services(12). You think that getting your own government to regulate bankers is hard enough? Try appealing to a transnational agreement brokered by corporations and justified by the deemed consent of citizens who have been neither informed nor consulted.

This deal is a direct assault on sovereignty and democracy. So where are the *Mail* and the *Telegraph* and the other papers which have campaigned so hard against all transfers of power to the European Union? Where are the Conservative MPs who have fought for an EU referendum? Eerie silence descends. They do not oppose the TTIP because their allegiance lies not with the nation but with the off-shored corporate elite.

These fake patriots proclaim a love for their country, while ensuring that there is nothing left to love. They are loyal to the pageantry – the flags, the coinage, the military parades – but intensely disloyal to the nation these symbols are supposed to represent. The greater the dissonance becomes, the louder the national anthem plays. **CT**

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George Monbiot's latest book is "*Feral: Rewilding The Land, The Sea and Human Life.*" This essay originally appeared in *The Guardian* newspaper. More of his work appears at his web site <http://monbiot.com>

.....
To the right-wing press and the Conservative party, patriotism means standing up to the European Union. But it also means capitulating to the United States

Fleecing the taxpayer in an age of petty tyranny

John W. Whitehead tells how red lights, drones and surveillance cameras pour cash into corporate coffers, yet do little to help the average citizen

.....
It's the endless, petty tyrannies inflicted on an overtaxed, overregulated, and underrepresented populace that occasionally nudge a weary public out of their numb indifference and into a state of outrage
.....

"There is no crueller tyranny than that which is perpetuated under the shield of law and in the name of justice." – Charles de Montesquieu

We labour today under the weight of countless tyrannies, large and small, carried out in the name of the national good by an elite class of government officials who are largely insulated from the ill effects of their actions. We, the middling classes, are not so fortunate. We find ourselves badgered, bullied and browbeaten into bearing the brunt of their arrogance, paying the price for their greed, suffering the backlash for their militarism, agonizing as a result of their inaction, feigning ignorance about their backroom dealings, overlooking their incompetence, turning a blind eye to their misdeeds, cowering from their heavy-handed tactics, and blindly hoping for change that never comes.

As I point out in my book, *A Government of Wolves: The Emerging American Police State*, the overt signs of the despotism exercised by the increasingly authoritarian regime that passes itself off as the United States government are all around us: warrantless surveillance of Americans' private phone and email conversations by the NSA; SWAT team raids of Americans' homes; shootings of unarmed citizens by police; harsh punishments meted out to schoolchildren in the name of zero tolerance; drones taking to the skies domesti-

cally; endless wars; out-of-control spending; militarized police; roadside strip searches; roving TSA sweeps; privatized prisons with a profit incentive for jailing Americans; fusion centers that collect and disseminate data on Americans' private transactions; and militarized agencies with stockpiles of ammunition, to name some of the most appalling.

Yet as egregious as these incursions on our rights may be, it's the endless, petty tyrannies inflicted on an overtaxed, overregulated, and underrepresented populace that occasionally nudge a weary public out of their numb indifference and into a state of outrage. Consider, for example, that federal and state governments now require on penalty of a fine that individuals apply for permission before they can grow exotic orchids, host elaborate dinner parties, gather friends in one's home for Bible studies, give coffee to the homeless, or keep chickens as pets.

Consider, too, the red light camera schemes that have been popping up all over the country. These traffic cameras, little more than intrusive, money-making scams for states, have been shown to do little to increase safety while actually contributing to more accidents. Nevertheless, they are being inflicted on unsuspecting drivers by revenue-hungry municipalities, despite revelations of corruption, collusion and fraud.

In most cases, state and local governments arrange to lease the cameras from a corpora-

tion such as Redflex, which takes its cut of ticket revenue first, with the excess going to the states and municipalities. The cameras, which are triggered by sensors buried in the road, work by taking photos of drivers who enter intersections after a traffic light turns red. What few realize, however, is that you don't actually have to run a red light to get "caught." Many drivers have triggered the cameras simply by making a right turn on red or crossing the sensor but not advancing into the intersection.

Indeed, these intricate red light camera systems – which also function as surveillance cameras – placed in cities and towns throughout America, ostensibly for our own good, are in reality simply another means for government and corporate officials to fleece the American people. Virginia is a perfect example of what happens when politicians sacrifice safety to generate revenue. In March 2010, Governor Bob McDonnell approved legislation that allows private corporations operating the red light camera systems, such as the Australian-based Redflex, to directly access motorists' confidential information from the Department of Motor Vehicles. What this means is that not only will government agents have one more means of monitoring a person's whereabouts, but a remote, privately-owned corporation will now have access to drivers' confidential information.

Another provision signed into law by McDonnell also shortened the amount of time given to alleged traffic law violators to respond to citations resulting from red light camera violations. While prior law allotted 60 days for the response, the amendment cut that time in half to 30 days. This gives the driver scant time to receive and review the information, determine what action is required, inspect the evidence, consider appealing the citation and respond appropriately. In this way, by shortening the appeal time, more drivers are forced to pay the fine or face added penalties.

For red light camera manufacturers such as Redflex, there's a lot of money to be made

from these "traffic safety" fines. Redflex, which has installed and operates over 2,000 red light camera programs in 220 localities across the United States and Canada, made \$25 million in 2008. In addition to revenue from fines, Redflex also gets paid for installing the red light cameras, which cost \$25,000 a pop, plus \$13,800 per year for maintenance.

Although these cameras are in use all across America, Chicago boasts the "largest enforcement program in the world." Since installing Chicago's 384 red light cameras in 2003, Redflex has made \$97 million from residents of the Windy City, while the city has profited to the tune of over \$300 million. Hoping to pull in an additional \$30 million for the year 2013, Mayor Rahm Emanuel began negotiating a new contract last year with Redflex to install speed cameras. However, contract negotiations for the speed cameras were terminated shortly after it was revealed that Chicago city officials had been on the receiving end of millions of dollars in financial bribes from Redflex. Chicago is now in the process of terminating its contract with Redflex, despite seeming attempts by Mayor Emanuel's office to delay the process.

Redflex's use of graft and chicanery in Chicago in order to pull in greater profits seems to be the rule rather than the exception when it comes to the company's overall business practices. For example, in Center Point, Alabama, a red light camera program (again operated by Redflex) saw motorists being issued fines under the pretext that their tickets could be appealed and their cases heard in court. Unfortunately, since no such court exists, those targeted with citations were compelled to pay the fine. They are now pursuing a class-action lawsuit against the city and Redflex.

One particularly corrupt practice aimed at increasing the incidence of red light violations (and fines) involves the shortening of yellow lights in intersections with red light cameras, despite the fact that reports show that lengthening the yellow lights serves to minimize accidents. According to the US Department of Transportation, "a one second

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Redflex's use of graft and chicanery in Chicago in order to pull in greater profits seems to be the rule rather than the exception when it comes to the company's overall business practices

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Those who claim to champion the use of red light cameras in the name of traffic safety are loath to consider reducing the length of yellow lights if it means losing significant citation revenue
.....

increase in yellow time results in 40 percent decrease in severe red light crashes.”

Indeed, those who claim to champion the use of red light cameras in the name of traffic safety are loath to consider reducing the length of yellow lights if it means losing significant citation revenue. An investigative report by a Tampa Bay news station revealed that in 2011, Florida officials conspired to reduce the length of yellow lights at key intersections below minimum federal recommendations in order to issue more citations and collect more fines via red light camera. By reducing the length of yellow lights by a mere half-second, Florida officials doubled the number of citations issued. Contrast that with what happened when the yellow light time was increased from 3 seconds to the minimum requirement of 4.3 seconds at one Florida intersection: traffic citations dropped by 90 percent.

If you want to know the real motives behind any government program, follow the money trail. Florida is a perfect example. In 2012 alone, Florida pulled in about \$100 million from red light cameras operating in 70 communities. About half the profits went into state coffers, while the other half was split between counties, cities and the corporation which manufactures the cameras. Officials are anticipating increased profits of \$120 million for 2013. Following the trail beyond the local governments working with Redflex to inflict these cameras on drivers, and you'll find millions of dollars in campaign funds flowing to Florida politicians from lobbyists for the red light camera industry.

Fortunately, the resistance against these programs is gaining traction, with localities across the United States cancelling their red-light camera programs in droves. In early May 2013, officials in Phoenix, Arizona backedpedaled on a one-year extension of their contract with Redflex, with the city's chief financial officer, Jeff Dewitt saying, "We made a mistake." Voters in League City, Texas became the fifth city in the state to vote to end red light camera enforcement, ending another of Redflex's

contracts in the United States. Cities in Florida, Arizona, and California have terminated contract negotiations with the company, and in March 2013, a parish in Louisiana voted to refund nearly \$20 million in revenue from red-light cameras after yet another corruption scandal came to light. Florida state legislators are also considering banning all red light cameras in the state.

What's the lesson here? Whether you're talking about combatting red light cameras, banning the use of weaponized surveillance drones domestically, putting an end to warrantless spying, or reining in government overspending, if you really want to enact change, don't waste your time working at the national level, where graft and corruption are entrenched. The place to foment change, institute true reforms, and resist government overreach is at the local level. That's what federalism in early America was all about – government from the bottom up – a loose collective of local governments with power invested in the populace, reflecting their will to those operating at the national level.

Remarking on the benefits of the American tradition of local self-government in the 1830s, the French historian Alexis de Tocqueville observed: "Local institutions are to liberty what primary schools are to science; they put it within the people's reach; they teach people to appreciate its peaceful enjoyment and accustom them to make use of it. Without local institutions a nation may give itself a free government, but it has not got the spirit of liberty."

To put it another way, if we are to have any hope of reclaiming our run-away government and restoring our freedoms, change will have to start at the local level and trickle upwards. There is no other way. **CT**

.....
John W. Whitehead is a constitutional attorney, president of The Rutherford Institute and editor of GadflyOnline.com. His latest book is "A Government of Wolves: The Emerging American Police State" (SelectBooks)

Is Israel an Apartheid State? Two opinions

Uri Avnery declares his reasons why Israel does not practice apartheid. **Jonathan Cook** disagrees, saying that Avnery’s argument is confused and misses some very important facts

No, it ISN’T apartheid, writes Uri Avneri

Is Israel an apartheid state? This question is not going away. It raises its head every few months.

The term “apartheid” is often used purely for propaganda purposes. Apartheid, like racism and fascism, is a rhetorical term one uses to denigrate one’s opponent.

But apartheid is also a term with a precise content. It applies to a specific regime. Equating another regime to it may be accurate, partly correct or just wrong. So, necessarily, will be the conclusions drawn from the comparison.

Recently, I had the opportunity to discuss this subject with an expert, who had lived in South Africa throughout the apartheid era. I learned a lot from this.

Is Israel an apartheid state? Well, first one must settle the question: which Israel? Israel proper, within the Green Line, or the Israeli occupation regime in the occupied Palestinian territories, or both together?

Let’s come back to that later.

Differences

The differences between the two cases are obvious.

First, the SA regime was based, as with

their Nazi mentors, on the theory of racial superiority. Racism was its official creed. The Zionist ideology of Israel is not racist, in this sense, but rather based on a mixture of nationalism and religion, though the early Zionists were mostly atheists.

The founders of Zionism always rejected accusations of racism as absurd. It’s the anti-Semites who are racist. Zionists were liberal, socialist, progressive. (As far as I know, only one Zionist leader had openly endorsed racism: Arthur Ruppin, the German Jew who was the father of the Zionist settlements in the early 20th century.)

Then there are the numbers. In SA there was a huge black majority. Whites were about a fifth of the population.

In Israel proper, the Arab citizens constitute a minority of about 20%. In the total territory under Israeli rule between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River, the numbers of Jews and Arabs are roughly equal. The Arabs may by now constitute a small majority – precise numbers are hard to come by. This Arab majority is bound to grow slowly larger as time passes.

Furthermore, the white economy in SA was totally dependent on black labour. At the beginning of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza strip in 1967, the Zionist insistence on “Jewish Labour” came to an end and cheap Arab labour from the “territories” flooded Israel. However,

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with the beginning of the first intifada this development was stopped with surprising speed. Large numbers of foreign workers were imported: Eastern Europeans and Chinese for the building trade, Thais for agriculture, Philipinos for personal care, etc.

It is now one of the main jobs of the Israeli army to prevent Palestinians from illegally crossing the de facto border” into Israel to seek work.

This is a fundamental difference between the two cases, one that has a profound impact on the possible solutions.

Sadly, in the West Bank, the Palestinians are widely employed in the building of the settlements and work in the enterprises there, which my friends and I have called to boycott. The economic misery of the population drives them to this perverse situation.

In Israel proper, Arab citizens complain about discrimination, which limits their employment in Jewish enterprises and government offices. The authorities regularly promise to do something about this kind of discrimination.

On the whole, the situation of the Arab minority inside Israel proper is much like that of many national minorities in Europe and elsewhere. They enjoy equality under the law, vote for parliament, are represented by very lively parties of their own, but in practice suffer discrimination in many areas. To call this apartheid would be grossly misleading.

I always thought that one of the major differences was that the Israeli regime in the occupied territories expropriates Palestinian lands for Jewish settlements. This includes private property and so-called “government lands”.

In Ottoman times, the land reserves of the towns and villages were registered in the name of the Sultan. Under the British, these lands became government property, and they remained so under the Jordanian regime. When Israel occupied the West Bank in 1967, these lands were taken over

by the occupation regime and turned over to the settlers, depriving the Palestinian towns and villages of the land reserves they need for natural increase.

By the way, after the 1948 war, huge stretches of Arab land in Israel were expropriated and a wide array of laws enacted for this purpose – not only the “absentee” property of the refugees, but also lands of Arabs who were declared “present absentees” – an absurd term meaning people who had not left Israel during the war but had left their villages. And the “government lands” in the part of Palestine that had become Israel also served to settle the masses of new Jewish immigrants who streamed into the country.

I always thought that in this respect we were worse than SA. Not so, said my friend, the apartheid government did exactly the same, deporting Blacks to certain areas and grabbing their land for Whites Only.

.....
White fight

I always thought that in SA all the Whites were engaged in the fight against all the Blacks. However, it appears that both sides were profoundly divided.

On the white side, there were the Afrikaners, the descendents of Dutch settlers, speaking a Dutch dialect called Afrikaans, and the British who spoke English. These were two communities of roughly equal size who disliked each other intensely. The British despised the unsophisticated Afrikaners, the Afrikaners hated the effete British. Indeed, the apartheid party called itself “nationalist” mainly because it considered itself a nation born in the country, while the British were attached to their homeland. (I am told that the Afrikaners called the British “salty penis”, because they stood with one foot in SA and with the other in Britain, so that their sexual organ dipped into the ocean.)

The black population was also divided into many communities and tribes who did

not like each other, making it difficult for them to unite for the liberation struggle.

The situation in the West Bank is in many ways similar to the apartheid regime.

Since Oslo, the West Bank is divided into areas A, B and C, in which Israeli rule is exercised in different ways. In SA, there were many different Bantustans (“homelands”) with different regimes. Some were officially fully autonomous, others were partly so. All were enclaves surrounded by white territories.

In certain respects, the situation in SA was at least officially better than in the West Bank. Under SA law, the Blacks were at least officially “separate but equal”. The general law applied to all. This is not the case in our occupied territories, where the local population is subject to military law, which is quite arbitrary, while their settler neighbors are subject to Israeli civil law.

International boycott

One contentious question: how far – if at all - did the international boycott contribute to the downfall of the apartheid regime?

When I asked Archbishop Desmond Tutu, he answered that the effect was mainly moral. It raised the morale of the black community. My new friend said the same – but applied it to the Whites. Their morale was undermined.

How much did this contribute to the victory? My friend estimated: about 30%.

The economic effect was minor. The psychological effect was far more important. The Whites considered themselves the vanguard of the West in the fight against communism. The ungratefulness of the West stunned them. (They would have wholeheartedly subscribed to the promise of Theodor Herzl, the founder of the Zionist movement, that the future Jewish state would be the vanguard of Europe and a wall against Asiatic - viz. Arab - barbarism.)

It was no accident that apartheid broke down a few years after the collapse of the

Soviet empire. The US lost interest. Can this happen in our relations with the US, too?

(By the way, young South African blacks who were sent by the African National Congress to the Soviet Union to study were shocked by the racism they met there. “They are worse than our Whites,” they commented.)

The area where the boycott hit the apartheid people the most was sports. Cricket is a national obsession in SA. When they could no longer take part in international competitions, they felt the blow. Their self-confidence was broken.

Their international isolation forced them to think more deeply about the morality of apartheid. There was more and more self-questioning. In the final elections after the agreement, many Whites, including many Afrikaners, voted for the end of apartheid.

Will a boycott of Israel have the same effect? I doubt it. Jews are used to being isolated. “The whole world against us” is, for them, a natural situation. Indeed, I sometimes have the feeling that many Jews feel uncomfortable when the situation is different.

One huge difference between the two cases is that all South Africans – black, white, “coloured” or Indian – wanted one state. There were no takers for partition. (David Ben-Gurion, a great advocate of Palestine-style partition, once proposed concentrating all the Whites in SA in the Cape region and establishing there an Israel-style white state. No one was interested. A similar proposal by Ben-Gurion for Algeria met the same fate.)

In our case, a large majority on each side wants to live in a state of their own. The idea of a unified country, in which Hebrew-speaking Jewish Israelis and Arabic-speaking Palestinians will live side-by-side as equals, serving in the same army and paying the same taxes does not appeal to them at all.

Apartheid was brought down by the Blacks themselves. No crypto-colonialist

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In certain respects, the situation in SA was at least officially better than in the West Bank. Under SA law, the Blacks were at least officially “separate but equal”

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Avnery, like many before him, makes the mistake of thinking that, by pointing out the differences between Israel and apartheid South Africa, he proves that Israel is not an apartheid state
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condescension can obscure this fact.

The mass strikes of African workers, on whom the white economy depended, made the position of the ruling Whites impossible. The mass uprising of the Blacks, who displayed immense physical courage, was decisive. In the end, the Blacks liberated themselves.

And another difference: in SA there was a Nelson Mandela and a Frederik de Klerk **CT**

.....
Uri Avnery is an Israeli writer and founder of the Gush-Shalom peace movement
.....

Yes, it IS apartheid, writes Jonathan Cook

Yes, I know. Uri Avnery has achieved many great things as a journalist and a peace activist. He has probably done more to educate people around the world about the terrible situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, and for longer, than any other single human being. And, to boot, he's just celebrated his 90th birthday. So best wishes to him.

Nonetheless, it is important to challenge the many fallacious claims Avnery makes to bolster the arguments in his latest article, dismissing the growing comparisons being made between Israel and apartheid South Africa. There is much to criticise in his weakly argued piece, based on a recent conversation with an unnamed "expert". Avnery, like many before him, makes the mistake of thinking that, by pointing out the differences between Israel and apartheid South Africa, he proves that Israel is not an apartheid state. But this is the ultimate straw-man argument. No one claims Israel is identical to South Africa. You don't need an expert to realise that.

When people call Israel an apartheid state, they are referring to the crime of apartheid as defined in international law. According to the 2002 Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, apartheid

comprises inhumane acts "committed in the context of an institutionalized regime of systematic oppression and domination by one racial group over any other racial group or groups and committed with the intention of maintaining that regime".

So what colour the victims of apartheid are, what proportion of the population they constitute, whether the economy depends on their productive labour, whether the early Zionists were socialists, whether the Palestinians have a Nelson Mandela, and so on have precisely zero relevance to determining whether Israel is an apartheid state.

A key distinction for Avnery is between "Israel proper" and the occupied territories. In the territories, Avnery admits, there are some parallels with apartheid South Africa. But inside Israel, he thinks the comparison is outrageously unfair. Let's set aside the not-insignificant matter that Israel refuses to recognise its internationally defined borders; or that one of its major strategies is a colonial-style divide-and-rule policy that depends on establishing differences in rights for Palestinians under its rule as a way to better oppress them.

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Jewish state

Avnery's motives in highlighting this territorial distinction should be fairly clear. He believes the occupation is a crime and that it must end. But he also believes that Israel as a Jewish state should continue after the occupation ends. In fact, he sees the two matters as inextricably tied. In his view, Israel's long-term survival as a Jewish state depends on severing it from the occupied territories.

This concurs with fairly standard liberal Zionist ideology: segregation is seen as offering protection from demographic threats posed by non-Jews to the future success of the Jewish state, and has reached its apotheosis in the building of the West Bank wall and the disengagement from Gaza. Avnery is simply one of the most humane

proponents of this line of thinking.

But for this reason, as I have argued before, Avnery should be treated as an unreliable mentor and guide on matters relating to Palestinians inside Israel – the group that is hardest to deal with under a strictly segregationist approach.

[<http://www.jonathan-cook.net/2006-11-18/hollow-visions-of-palestines-future/>]

Avnery is unlikely to treat criticism of “Israel proper”, such as the apartheid comparison, based on the merits of the case. He will react defensively. Admitting that Israel is an apartheid state inside its internationally recognised borders would undermine the legitimacy of his prized Jewish state. It would indicate that his life’s work of campaigning for the creation of a Palestinian state to preserve his Jewish state was misguided, and probably harmful.

The most outrageous claim Avnery makes in the article, precisely to deflect attention from the problem of a self-defined Jewish state and its relations with a large Palestinian minority, is the following:

“On the whole, the situation of the Arab minority inside Israel proper is much like that of many national minorities in Europe and elsewhere. They enjoy equality under the law, vote for parliament, are represented by very lively parties of their own, but in practice suffer discrimination in many areas. To call this apartheid would be grossly misleading.”

One does not need to concede that the comparison with apartheid is right, both in the occupied territories and inside “Israel proper” – though I do – to understand that it is, in fact, Avnery who is being grossly misleading here.

There is no sense in which Israel’s treatment of its 1.5 million Palestinian citizens is comparable, as Avnery argues, to the situation of national minorities in European states. Palestinian citizens do not simply face unofficial, informal or spontaneous discrimination. It is structural, institutionalised and systematic.

Here are a few questions Avnery or those who agree with him need to answer:

- Which European states have, like Israel, nationalised 93 per cent of their land so that one ethnic group (in Israel’s case, Jewish citizens) can exclude another ethnic group (Palestinian Arab citizens)?

- Which European states operate vetting committees, enshrined in law, in hundreds of rural communities precisely to prevent one ethnic group (Palestinian Arabs) from living in these communities?

[<http://www.jonathan-cook.net/2010-12-15/arab-familys-home-win-blow-to-israeli-jews-only-policy/>]

- Which European states have separate citizenship laws – in Israel’s case, the Law of Return (1950) and the Citizenship Law (1952) – based on ethnic belonging?

- Which European states have designed their citizenship laws, as Israel has done, to confer rights on members of an ethnic group (in Israel’s case, Jews) who are not actually yet citizens or present in the state, privileging them over a group (Palestinian Arabs) who do have citizenship and are present in the state?

- Which European states have more than 55 laws that explicitly discriminate based on which ethnic group a citizen belongs to?

[<http://adalah.org/eng/Israeli-Discriminatory-Law-Database/>]

- Which European states, like Israel, defer some of what should be their sovereign powers to extra-territorial bodies – in Israel’s case, to the Jewish Agency and the Jewish National Fund – whose charters obligate them to discriminate based on ethnic belonging?

- Which European states deny their citizens access to any civil institutions on personal status matters such as marriage, divorce and burial, requiring all citizens to submit to the whims and prejudices of religious leaders?

[<http://www.jonathan-cook.net/2009-08-06/russian-jews-defy-israeli-rabbis-ban-on-marriage/>]

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Admitting that Israel is an apartheid state inside its internationally recognised borders would indicate that his life’s work of campaigning for the creation of a Palestinian state to preserve his Jewish state was misguided, and probably harmful

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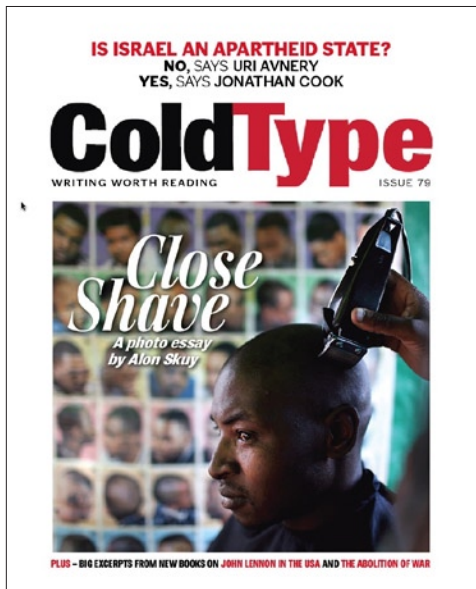
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Maybe Avnery can find the odd European state with one such perverse practise, or something similar
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• Which European states do not recognise their own nationality, and make it possible to join the dominant national group (in Israel's case, Jews) or to immigrate only through conversion?
[<http://www.jonathan-cook.net/2013-10-18/court-nixes-push-for-israeli-nationality/>]

Maybe Avnery can find the odd European state with one such perverse practise, or something similar. But I have no doubt he cannot find a European state that has more than one such characteristic. Israel has all of these and more; in fact, too many for me to enumerate them all.

So if Israel inside its recognised borders is nothing like European states or the United States, or any other state we usually classify as democratic, maybe Avnery or his supporters can explain exactly what kind of state Israel is like. **CT**

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Jonathan Cook is a winner of the Martha Gellhorn Special Prize for Journalism. His latest books are "Israel and the Clash of Civilisations: Iraq, Iran and the Plan to Remake the Middle East" (Pluto Press) and "Disappearing Palestine: Israel's Experiments in Human Despair" (Zed Books). His website is www.jonathan-cook.net



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John Lennon, Hippy Messiah

An excerpt from *The Walrus and the Elephants: John Lennon's Years of Revolution*, a new book by James A. Mitchell, published by Seven Stories Press

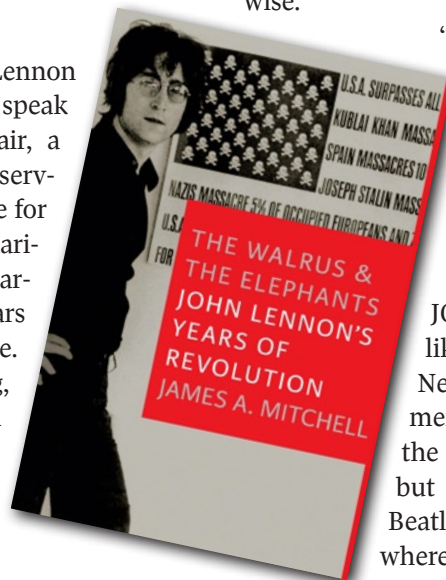
CHAPTER ONE THE ADVENT OF THE HIPPIE MESSIAH

"We came here . . . not only to help John and to spotlight what's going on . . . but also to show and to say to all of you that apathy isn't it, and that we can do something." – John Lennon (Ann Arbor, MI, December 1971)

In December 1971 John Lennon stood onstage to sing and speak on behalf of John Sinclair, a radical leader who was serving a ten-year prison sentence for possession of two joints of marijuana. Sinclair had been incarcerated for more than two years when Lennon pleaded his case.

Two days after Lennon sang, "Let him be, set him free," a state circuit court reversed a previous decision and Sinclair walked out of prison.

With the nation reeling after years of political turmoil, America needed a new kind of leader. The recently turned ex-Beatle was one of the most famous and influential people on the planet. If he could get a man out of prison, what else might he do?



THE WALRUS AND THE ELEPHANTS

John Lennon's Years
of Revolution

James A. Mitchell
(Seven Stories Press)
\$23.95

A government eager to silence enemies asked the same question. They thought Lennon might use his considerable clout to, in their words, "sway" the upcoming presidential election. It would be better for some people if he just went back to England, and the Nixon administration tried to make that happen through methods legal and otherwise.

"So flower power didn't work," Lennon said from the stage between songs that night. "So what? We start again."

JOHN LENNON FELT like a newcomer to New York in the summer of 1971. He'd been to the city before, of course, but those were whirlwind Beatles visits, frantic tours where Manhattan was seen from limousines and hotel rooms. Lennon sought a lower-profile life, ironically in the very place where, seven years earlier, he had launched the "British invasion" of English rock and everything that followed. Back then all it took

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The recently turned ex-Beatle was one of the most famous and influential people on the planet. If he could get a man out of prison, what else might he do?
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Lennon had been cautious, though, understandably hesitant after enduring media scrutiny and public backlash on more than one occasion
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was an electric guitar, a smart-ass grin, and “Yeah, yeah, yeah.”

But this time there were no teenage screams to drown out the music, no mobs of girls desperate for a glimpse at a Beatle. It wasn’t the sixties anymore, a decade of war and assassinations, flower power and protests. Lennon was no longer one of the “Fab Four,” a point he made often.

“Tried to shake our image just a cycling through the Village,” Lennon wrote in “New York City,” among a fresh batch of songs inspired by his new home. He and wife Yoko Ono had stayed first in Midtown’s St. Regis hotel before settling that fall at 105 Bank Street on the west side of Greenwich Village, a space formerly occupied by drummer Joe Butler of the Lovin’ Spoonful. The downtown neighborhood suited Lennon’s frame of mind: a gritty yet colorful free-for-all of music, radical politics, art, and dope smoked openly on the streets; an atmosphere worthy of the finest psychedelic “Sgt. Pepper” vibes.

The apartment was modest by New York standards, barely two rooms, more functional than spacious. It was worlds apart from Tittenhurst, the English estate Lennon left behind, a home that made an ironic setting in the eyes of more than a few critics of the *Imagine* promotional film (“Imagine no possessions”). Lennon was apparently embarrassed by his wealth, among other by-products of Beatlemania. He told authors Peter McCabe and Robert Schonfield, who that summer had been researching a book on the Beatles’ breakup, *Apple to the Core*, “I can’t really go on the road and take a lot more money. What am I going to do with it? I’ve got all the fucking bread I need.”

It wasn’t a random thought; he’d recently discussed the “Imagine” lyrics with Hendrik Hertzberg of the *New Yorker*. “I began to think: I don’t want that big house we built for ourselves in England,” Lennon acknowledged. “I don’t want the bother of owning all those big houses and big cars. It’s clogging my mind just to think about what

amount of gear I have in England. All my books and possessions; walls full of books I’ve collected.”

Lennon thought those books belonged elsewhere, in libraries and prisons, as with most of his other belongings.

Lennon was trying to get away from the trappings of wealth and fame, and with equal intensity longed to take part in something larger than himself and bigger than the Beatles, if that could be imagined. The explosive political and cultural conflicts that had been brewing in America demanded his attention. In early 1971, Lennon had given extensive interviews to *Rolling Stone* and *Red Mole*, a British underground newspaper edited by Tariq Ali. Lennon was “ashamed” that he hadn’t been more active in antiwar and civil rights movements. He had often felt torn between the commercialism of early Beatles success – “everybody trying to use us” – and the desire to sneak more adult topics into their songs: “We’d turned out to be a Trojan horse.”

He had been cautious, though, understandably hesitant after enduring media scrutiny and public backlash on more than one occasion. There had been legendary scandals including his taken-out-of-context, blown-out-of-proportion observation that British youth weren’t too keen on the church and that the Beatles were more popular than Jesus Himself. He told Ali that, back in those days, manager Brian Epstein begged the boys not to weigh in on what had become the dominant issue in America.

“Epstein tried to waffle on at us about saying nothing about Vietnam,” Lennon explained. “George and I said, ‘Listen, when they ask next time, we’re going to say we don’t like the war and we think they should get right out.’ . . . That was a pretty radical thing to do, especially for the ‘Fab Four.’”

There were, at the time, internal differences of opinion about the Beatles’ place in the world as artistic or revolutionary leaders. Before leaving England Lennon had exchanged letters with Paul and Linda Mc-

Cartney, prompted by public statements regarding the group's legacy. "Do you really think most of today's art came about because of the Beatles?" Lennon asked. "I'm not ashamed of the Beatles – (I did start it all)."

He also wanted to keep their achievements in perspective: "Didn't we always say we were part of the Movement – not all of it? Of course we changed the world – but try and follow it through – GET OFF YOUR GOLD DISC AND FLY!"

Lennon and McCartney realized that more involvement had been expected of them as a group. *Red Mole* publisher Ali, an Indian-born, British-raised journalist who was among the new breed of counterculture scribes, had written that artists of Lennon's stature had an obligation to do more than just flash an occasional peace sign. At the same time, Lennon hadn't fully come to terms with his newfound revolutionary status.

"He was very modest about it," recalls Ali. "He said, 'Are you sure you want to do an interview with me? Your magazine is so intellectual.'"

For the better part of two days they discussed Vietnam, politics, activism, and the challenges the '60s generation now faced.

"It was John Lennon's 'State of the Union' message," Ali says. "That's what it was to the world at that point in time."

Lennon wanted to be involved, and had been among the first to admit that the youth culture of the sixties had perhaps been a bit too laid-back in its approach.

"The acid dream is over," Lennon said. "That's what I'm trying to tell them." As a musician he could offer songs that brought people together, like the 1969 anthem "Give Peace a Chance," written and recorded during a very public honeymoon spent on bedded display before the world's cameras. He envisioned that the song could be sung "in the pub or on a demonstration." He took it a step further in 1971 with "Power to the People," and told Ali that his post-Beatles

plans included a more active role in the Movement: "I would like to compose songs for the revolution. . . . I hope they see that rock and roll is not the same as Coca-Cola. That's why I'm putting out more heavy statements now and trying to shake off the teeny-bopper image."

In America Lennon was ready to practice what he preached. "Get on your feet," Lennon said in "Power to the People," and "into the street." He loved the idea that he could, more or less, freely walk around Manhattan just like everyone else. The city was alive; the Village a heartbeat that measured the pulse of the streets. Lennon felt it in the basement hangouts of St. Marks Place, the bars on Bleecker, and in Washington Square Park, where the central fountain was a magnet for struggling musicians with talent ranging from up-and-coming to probably-not-happening but no less passionate. John and Yoko casually joined the crowds who enjoyed music played for its own sake, songs not likely to be heard on Top 10 radio.

"Up come a man with a guitar in his hand singing, 'Have a marijuana if you can.'" David Peel and his Lower East Side band, as immortalized in Lennon's "New York City," were among the park's regular acts, singing and playing for fun and whatever spare change people tossed into an open guitar case. Pot featured prominently in Peel compositions, earnest songs about street life and being a hippie in the city.

In spite of Peel's amateur abilities, Lennon was taken by the music. The songs were of, by, and for the people, and to Lennon's ears seemed far more intimate, more relevant than the inherently commercial nature of popular music. Being too successful wasn't necessarily considered cool in the Village.

"Why do we have to pay to see stars?" Peel asked his audience, a rhetorical question from the perspective of a struggling musician.

"He must be talking about me," Lennon reportedly mused. He'd been wrestling with

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Davis recalls reading John Lennon's revolution-fueled interviews and recognizing not just a kindred spirit, but one who could revitalize a fading antiwar movement
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the very nature of being a pop star just as he had his standing in the revolutionary world.

IN WASHINGTON SQUARE Park Lennon first met Jerry Rubin, a friend of Peel's and one of the "Chicago Seven" defendants who, three years earlier, had been charged with inciting riots at the 1968 Democratic Convention.

Lennon said that upon arriving in New York, "the first people who got in touch with me were Jerry Rubin and Abbie Hoffman. It's as simple as that."

Lennon seemed the answer to the radical leaders' long-mum-bled prayers; it was "love at first sight" from Rubin's perspective. "Great vibes," Rubin described the meeting, confident that Lennon shared his vision. "The Yippies had been applying Beatles tactics to politics, trying to merge music and life."

The Youth International Party – the "Yippies" – were an informal group of antiwar and civil rights activists fronted by Rubin and Hoffman. In Chicago they had joined forces with New Left leaders including Rennie Davis and Tom Hayden. Their Chicago activities made them famous in some circles, notorious in others. Supporters who gave trial testimony on behalf of all the Chicago defendants included Judy Collins, Arlo Guthrie, Norman Mailer, Timothy Leary, Reverend Jesse Jackson, and others, but the 1970 court proceedings were mostly seen as a media circus dominated by Hoffman and Rubin's absurdist theater tactics. Among other stunts, they wore judicial robes to court one day, underneath which – certain they'd be ordered to remove the garments – were Chicago Police Department uniforms. The Seven had been found guilty of crossing state lines to start a riot, and lived with a suspended sentence hanging over their heads for two years before being acquitted.

The Chicago Seven – Rubin, Hoffman, Davis, Dave Dellinger, Hayden, John Froines,

and Lee Weiner – had followed separate paths since the trial; some as de facto leaders of the antiwar movement, others as media-fueled celebrities. By 1971 Hoffman and Rubin's act may have worn thin: ABC News dismissed them as "Groucho Marxists," not to be taken seriously given their street-theater gags like a mock campaign to elect a pig president (Pigasus the Immortal) or throwing money onto the floor of the stock exchange for a laugh. Davis says there was essentially a schism on the Left around the effectiveness of Hoffman and Rubin, and a guiding force was needed if they were to reenergize in time to replace Nixon as president.

Maybe it was only the end of a difficult decade, but the nation's spirit of rebellion seemed broken. Many activists continued their work, but on a local level – in schools and communities rather than on the international stage of the antiwar movement. *Time* magazine wondered if the dreaded bomb of student protest was a dud. "Something has happened in American life – or has failed to happen," offered a February essay entitled "The Cooling of America": "In dead winter, 1971, after months of recession, a decade of war abroad and domestic violence, a mood approaching quiet has fallen like a deep snow."

"There was so much steam to oppose the war," says Davis, a Michigan native who cut his revolutionary teeth in Ann Arbor. "The steam ran out. Everybody could see it; you couldn't get anybody to do anything."

Davis recalls reading John Lennon's revolution-fueled interviews and recognizing not just a kindred spirit, but one who could revitalize a fading antiwar movement.

"It was an extraordinary moment to me," Davis says. "Here was this human being, who symbolized so well his entire generation through the Beatles, making statements that clearly indicated he was not just saying, 'I'm for peace.' This was someone saying, 'I'm an activist, I'm ready to join up.'"

Lennon landed in America at a precari-

ous time, a time when thousands were being arrested, when a few protesters had been killed, and when thousands were dying in Vietnam. So you didn't necessarily hang back. You put yourself on the line. You made a statement of your active involvement. Lennon had never considered himself a political man, but maybe times had changed. In an October interview with the underground *Los Angeles Free Press*, Lennon said he'd only recently understood what he might have to offer.

"I wouldn't say I've given up politics in that way," Lennon reflected. "I mean, I never took up politics. Things I do – or for that matter anybody does – are done politically. Any statement you make is a political statement. Any record, even your way of life is a political statement."

The Movement too was at a crossroads: Was the spirit and passion that had begun with the civil rights movement nearing an end? Davis waxed nostalgic for the sheer rightness of the struggle as it had been, that had begun when four black students sat at a Woolworth's diner reserved for "whites only" and inspired a six-month boycott of the store . . . and for the decade that had followed.

"It was clear to everyone, especially myself, that this enormous thing that began in 1960 at a lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina, was now a phenomenon, a historic event," Davis says. "And now, clearly, it was ending."

Or was it? In John Lennon, Davis and Rubin saw a glimpse of hope. Rubin needed something to restore his credibility, not only with mainstream America but within the Movement itself. In some ways, Rubin faced similar life issues to Lennon's – concerned about his future and uncertain of the legacy he'd thus far written. Rubin told *Rolling Stone* that he had more than a few doubts about his – and the revolution's – future.

"Everyone around me was depressed and confused," Rubin said. "Everyone in the Movement was condemning every-thing . . .

. . . condemning our whole history."

Lennon in New York presented a rare opportunity that Rubin eagerly seized. He placed a shot-in-the-dark call to Apple Records and was as surprised as anyone when Yoko called him back. Rubin and Hoffman's first encounter with John and Yoko fittingly took place beneath Washington Square's landmark arch; Lennon wore American flag sneakers, Yoko was all in black. After excited introductions they left the park and spent several hours in Hoffman's apartment. Rubin told John and Yoko that their bed-ins for peace were great, not unlike his own political stunts. John and Yoko said they considered Hoffman and Rubin to be artists; the radical leaders saw Lennon as a new kind of political activist.

Rubin asked early and often what exactly Lennon wanted to do. To be involved, Lennon told him. He wanted to put a band together, play music, and "give all the money back to the people"; to use his music and do his part for the Movement. He had said he intended to "compose songs for the revolution," and hoped to take those songs on the road and maybe shake things up a little.

"I want to do something political, and radicalize people and all that jazz," Lennon said. "This would be the best way . . . taking a really far-out show on the road, a mobile, political rock and roll show."

If he'd been back in London Lennon would have had all the contacts he wanted, as he dipped a tentative toe in British revolutionary waters, but in America he required some introductions to find the right causes to rally. Rubin's usefulness relied on whether the Yippie leader could serve as Lennon's tour guide into Left politics, Yankee style. He had to bring something to the Bank Street party to stand out from the dreamers and schemers who sought Lennon's friendship, confidence, and favors.

A specific issue piqued Lennon's interest, the struggles of Rubin's friend, Detroit activist John Sinclair, who was serving a harsh prison sentence: ten years for marijuana

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possession that instead seemed like punishment for his political views.

Either the sales pitch or the cause – ten years for two lousy joints! – clinched the deal. The immediacy of the effort appealed to Lennon – grab a guitar, fly to Michigan, and get involved, and for the crowd to do more than just scream in delight.

“We want the audience to participate fully, and not just admire God onstage,” Lennon told French TV reporter Jean-François Vallee, who spent a day filming a Bank Street bed-chat with John, Yoko, and Rubin in early December.¹¹ Lennon described the vision he’d been forming of a politically charged concert, free of superstar trappings, with the people and performers united in spirit.

That seemed to have been the problem when the Beatles last tried to perform in front of a crowd – and who knew what might happen if all four took the stage together again. “I am still mainly a musician,” Lennon said, perhaps wistfully, as he prepared to begin a new chapter in his career. Partly, his goal was to be just another musician, one without the superstar trappings; at the same time, in his writing and performing he was seeking to shine as an artist in ways that might even surpass what he had accomplished as a member of a group, even if the group did happen to be the Beatles.

“As an individual I still have a lot of power, I can always get on the media . . . because of the Beatles,” Lennon said. “Our job now is to tell them there is still hope and we still have things to do and we must get out now and change their heads. We can change! It isn’t over just because flower power didn’t work. It’s only the beginning.”

Lennon thought he’d found exactly what he’d hoped for when he left Britain, a chance to serve the Movement with his guitar and presence.

LENNON MAY HAVE been John Sinclair’s last hope for getting out of prison. Two years

into his sentence and nothing had worked, not letter-writing campaigns to the *Detroit News* or *Free Press*, not even when Abbie Hoffman tried to take the stage at Woodstock and say a few words about Sinclair’s ordeal. (Abbie’s timing was off: he stepped onstage while the Who were doing their thing, and legend holds that guitarist Pete Townshend belted Hoffman with his Gibson and sent him off.)

Sinclair was an underground Detroit legend dating back to his Wayne State University days in the early 1960s. A man of eclectic tastes in addition to an affinity for weed, Sinclair composed poetry, advocated for political causes and community benefits, and promoted his beloved jazz. With his future wife, German-born Magdalene “Leni” Arndt, Sinclair transformed the 1964-launched Detroit Artists Workshop into the more political, civil rights-driven White Panther Party, a name taken in response to Black Panther Huey Newton’s call to arms to people of all colors. Although the name was potentially confusing (and later changed to the Rainbow People’s Party), the White Panthers sympathized with what they considered a natural ally in the wake of the 1967 riots that rocked the Motor City.

“The hippies and the black people had the same enemy: the Detroit Police Department,” Sinclair says. “Another common bond was we smoked weed and so did most of them. Certainly the ones we came in contact with, artists and poets.”

Whether hippie or Panther, Sinclair said they shared common bonds as easily distinguishable minorities in a country divided by a so-called generation gap.

“They had a sign: long hair,” Sinclair says. “If you had long hair, smoked dope, liked rock and roll, didn’t have a job, and liked to fuck, you were a hippie. Hippies were great; best thing to ever happen to this country.”

Sinclair’s casual demeanor, that of the frequently if not perpetually stoned, could be deceptive; he was passionate and focused on the issues he championed. From a core

of community-based idealism, his grass-roots efforts tackled causes large and small but always local, unlike the higher-profile activists who basked in the national spotlight. While sympathetic, Sinclair pointed out that Detroit had its own problems.

“We were totally outside the established realm of politics, of which the left wing was the SDS and the mobilization of all the anti-war stuff,” Sinclair says. “We were always in support of that, but we were coming from a different cultural perspective.”

The local attention – good and bad – was just as intense as the national scrutiny faced by Rubin and Hoffman. Sinclair’s passions for pot and politics made him a target for campus police who considered longhairs enemies of the state.

“I was busted twice before,” Sinclair recalls. “Once for selling a ten-dollar ‘match-box’ to an undercover police officer; the second time an undercover policeman induced me to drive him to someone’s house where I got him a ten-dollar bag.”

The second arrest in 1965 ended with Sinclair spending six months in the Detroit House of Corrections. What should have been a cautionary tale – quit giving pot to relative strangers – didn’t take hold. Back on the streets, Sinclair continued his laid-back approach to freely sharing the weed.

“We were hippies, you know, we weren’t criminals,” he says. “We didn’t consider ourselves engaged in criminal behavior. Everything we did was open, free to the public, that’s what we were about.”

Everyone was welcome at the Detroit Artists Workshop, including two newcomers in late 1966: a man with long hair and a beret called “Louie,” and a woman introduced as “Pat” who wore hippie clothes, smoked pot, and helped with the typing. Pat played up to the men and Louie tried to score pot from whomever he could. Louie and Pat – in reality Vahan Kapagian and Jane Mumford of the Detroit Police Department – were comfortable with the hippies, and one memorable day Pat asked a question often heard

at the workshop.

“She asked me if I had a joint,” Sinclair says. “I rolled a joint, we had a smoke. She asked if she could take it with her. I said, ‘Here, let me give you another one,’ so I gave her a second one.”

The word “entrapment” probably didn’t slow down the two officers who, a month later, stormed the workshop with some of their friends and a fistful of warrants. Sinclair was arrested along with fifty-five others in what the papers called a “campus dope raid.” The charges dragged through two years’ worth of appeals, and in 1969 Sinclair began a ten-year prison sentence for a pair of joints.

For two years his friends and supporters had tried everything they could think of – appeals to sympathetic lawmakers, letters and advertisements in newspapers – but Sinclair remained stuck in prison. Hope came in two forms. The first was a political gambit played in July 1971 by President Richard Nixon when he lowered the voting age from twenty-one to eighteen. The impact went well beyond the election of the president; candidates at all levels of government would now need to sell their platforms to a generation that they had barely acknowledged before, let alone understood. Of particular interest to the college crowd, the politicians would quickly learn, were laws criminalizing marijuana use. Legislators across the country weighed whether it might be time to reduce simple possession from a felony to a misdemeanor.

Sinclair’s supporters hoped this might be the chance they’d been waiting for to get Sinclair’s story back in the public spotlight, told on front pages and evening newscasts. Sometimes it took sensational efforts, something as loud as a Yippie stunt, but backed up by mainstream credibility. A concert to rally the pro-pot, antiwar crowd could be the perfect combustion of audience and cause – if the right acts could be found. They needed a big star to draw the right amount of attention.

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One of the world's most sought-after performers was set to champion the Sinclair cause. Andrews had a signed contract that paid Lennon \$500 for his performance, a fee immediately signed back over to the John Sinclair Freedom Fund
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"We were always reaching for more," Sinclair says. "This time we hit the jackpot."

CONCERT PROMOTER PETER Andrews didn't believe it was really happening until John Lennon answered the phone.

Andrews and Leni Sinclair had flown to New York equipped with little more than a Jerry Rubin-provided phone number and some downtown addresses.

Andrews was well experienced in booking concerts in Ann Arbor, everything from local acts to Jefferson Airplane. He'd been approached about the intimidating task of filling the fifteen-thousand-seat Crisler Arena on behalf of a jailed poet.

"Sinclair wanted a big event," Andrews says. "He's in jail telling folks, 'I need something big here.'"

What they had wasn't enough. Andrews says the original plans for the Ann Arbor show included local musicians and a host of speakers, which might fill three thousand seats at best and leave a sad, empty-looking arena. Besides, wasn't John Sinclair old news?

"I looked at what they had and said, 'You have a real bomb on your hands,'" Andrews recalls. "He'd been in prison two years, and people have short memories."

Andrews considered the idea without much enthusiasm, until Leni Sinclair relayed an intriguing offer: John Lennon and Yoko Ono as headliners.

No way, thought Andrews. "It was too far out," he says. "The idea of him performing was pretty outrageous."

But it was real, and soon it was happening. Andrews and Leni shook their heads at their good fortune and set about closing the deal. While Andrews headed for Bank Street to confirm Lennon's interest in the concert, Leni took a cab to Jerry Rubin's Prince Street apartment to discuss adding another top-shelf artist to the line-up. Braced against the December chill she rang the bell. Hearing no response, Leni waited on the stoop for him to return.

"Before long, a man came up and rang the same doorbell," Leni says. He, too, was there to see Rubin, and they had a brief conversation. Leni told the kindred spirit of her husband's plight and how Rubin and John Lennon planned to help. Another man soon approached who had a key to the building, and they went inside to wait for Rubin.

"I sat in a chair and these two gentlemen started a conversation," Leni says. "I'm listening out of one ear, and it dawns on me that it was Bob Dylan and Phil Ochs. Jerry Rubin was trying to get Bob Dylan to play this concert with John Lennon."

A true radical dating back to when she fled Germany and dove headlong into Detroit's underground scene, Leni felt somewhat out of her league when she realized the company she was in.

"I never saw them again, and he didn't do the concert," Leni says. I don't hold that against him – you don't need Bob Dylan if you've got John Lennon." And though Dylan didn't end up on the bill for the Michigan concert, Phil Ochs did.

The trip from Detroit was an unqualified if unbelievable success: one of the world's most sought-after performers was set to champion the Sinclair cause. Andrews had a signed contract that paid Lennon \$500 for his performance, a fee immediately signed back over to the John Sinclair Freedom Fund. The fee-turned-donation was a paltry sum, of course, and Lennon was well aware that the many groups and activists who sought him out did so in part from financial need.

"I always take care of the underground," Lennon had said a few months earlier. He also had his own vision of what charity or benefits could accomplish. "If they get in trouble I lend them money or invest in them or whatever. I get asked every two days for at least five thousand pounds, and I usually give it to them." Lennon had in mind a foundation built on "a dollar a head" concert receipts that could benefit those who came calling.

Of equal value was Lennon the performer,

and the musical stamp of incalculable worth he could put on a given cause. With Sinclair in mind, Lennon previewed a song he'd started writing for the occasion, a bluesy number strummed on a steel guitar.

"I assured him it was very good," Andrews says. "And that John Sinclair would indeed love it."

Andrews, stunned at the prospect of a John Lennon concert, humbly asked Lennon to say a few words into a tape recorder, an oral testament to confirm the contents of the hastily drawn-up contract. Lennon's message was brief, to the point, even semiapologetic in some ways:

This is John and I'm with Yoko here. I just want to say we're coming along to the John Sinclair bust fund or rally or whatever it is to say hello. I won't be bringing a band or nothing like that because I'm only here as a tourist, but I'll probably fetch me guitar and we have a song that we wrote for John. That's that. We'll be there Friday . . . hello and good-bye and hope that's fine.

NATURALLY, JOHN LENNON and Yoko Ono were treated like royalty when they arrived in Michigan on Friday, December 10. Andrews booked – ironically – the presidential suite of Ann Arbor's Campus Inn, where he brought the couple after picking them up at the airport.

Selling tickets with Lennon's name on the bill was hardly a concern – the three-dollar entry fee was remarkably low even by 1971 standards – and the show sold out within a few hours. Andrews said that the modest price was at Sinclair's insistence, a "for the people" philosophy he later regretted.

"We had a breakeven budget and nobody got paid," Andrews says. "I wanted to charge twenty bucks, gross \$300,000, and we'd sell out in the same amount of time. You don't get too many opportunities to present John Lennon."

As in New York, Lennon hoped to downplay his fame, to be one of the street people

in the college town's hip stores and bustling downtown. Lennon spent part of the afternoon wandering through the shops, including some time with star-struck musicians in the Herb David Guitar Studio at the corner of Liberty and Fourth Street. There was no fanfare, owner David told the *Ann Arbor Chronicle*; Lennon simply walked in, so unassuming that at first he wasn't recognized by some of the people in the store.

The owner knew perfectly well who was standing in his shop. "Hi John," David said before introducing himself.

"I'm not John. I'm his cousin," Lennon grinned in response. "Hello cousin," David smiled back, and invited Lennon to relax and sit in a simple wooden chair. Lennon spent more than an hour in the store, at one point playing guitar to the delight of stunned customers. (The chair remained in place four decades later. A cardboard sign read, John Lennon sat here in 1971, a museum-worthy piece revered like presidential memorabilia.)

By evening Lennon was backstage at Crisler, where he patiently showed guitar chords to his improvised band. Satisfied that his support group understood the songs as well as could be reasonably expected, Lennon waited to close the show.

It was a long wait. The program began shortly after seven p.m. with the poet Allen Ginsberg, whose ballad of Sinclair had been given to Lennon as background information on the cause. It seemed a joint was lit each time John Sinclair's name was invoked, as smoke clouds formed in the arena that lingered through the long night. The next seven hours featured musical performances by local favorite Bob Seger, Teegarden and Van Winkle, Phil Ochs, Commander Cody and His Lost Planet Airmen ("Hot Rod Lincoln"), the Up, and jazz saxophonist Archie Shepp. While instruments and amplifiers were rotated between acts, the audience heard revolutionary rhetoric from Rennie Davis, Bobby Seale, Jerry Rubin, and others who had come to Ann Arbor to free an imprisoned pot-head; each of the speakers also brought his

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While instruments and amplifiers were rotated between acts, the audience heard revolutionary rhetoric from Rennie Davis, Bobby Seale, Jerry Rubin, and others who had come to Ann Arbor to free an imprisoned pothead

Wonder launched into “For Once in My Life.” Backstage, Lennon’s ears perked up; he hadn’t known the Motown star was on the bill. Lennon scrambled to find Andrews and get near the stage

own take on the Movement’s priorities.

Davis gave an impassioned speech that put our government’s hypocrisy in perspective: since Sinclair began his sentence two years earlier, American forces – under Nixon’s orders – had dropped bombs on Southeast Asia at the rate of “two and a half Hiroshima’s a week” – at the same time as the administration tried to convince America that the war was winding down.

Black Panther cofounder Seale let loose a free-verse, poetic rant on the “historical pollution” of war, hunger, murder, injustice – a rhythmic chant that long predated the cadence of rap: “The only solution to pollution is a people’s humane revolution!”

Rubin was typically excited, and made sweeping pronouncements on the state of the hippie union. “To all the people who say the Movement, the revolution is over, they ought to see what’s going on right here,” Rubin observed. “It doesn’t look over to me.”

Perhaps the most intriguing of Rubin’s statements – at least for certain members of the audience – were speculations on what might take place the following year at the 1972 Republican Convention, which at the time was scheduled to be held in California.

“We should do to the Republicans what we did to the Democrats in 1968,” Rubin said. “Bring a million to San Diego.”

Fellow Chicago Seven veteran Dave Dellinger made similar references, including plans for a political concert. “We want John out of prison,” Dellinger said, “to organize the music in San Diego.”

It wasn’t just the radicals; the concert and Lennon’s appearance quickly sparked a bandwagon. Knowing that new laws were set to pass to reduce the penalties for marijuana possession, and equally aware of a Beatle-brightened spotlight on the cause, calls for Sinclair to be released gained momentum. A statement read during the concert from Ann Arbor mayor Robert J. Harris called Sinclair’s sentence a “horror” and “disgrace.” Harris praised the state legislature for revising pot laws; the East Lansing City Council agreed

with a resolution in support of Sinclair’s appeal motion.

“Nothing like this has ever happened in history,” Leni Sinclair said, her primary focus on getting back a husband and father. “And it won’t be the last time – it’s too much fun.”

Arrangements were made for Sinclair himself to address the crowd; he snuck his way to a prison pay phone for a quick call to Ann Arbor. Andrews went onstage, stopped the show, and announced: “Ladies and gentlemen, we have a live phone call from Jackson.”

“I’m so wiped out I don’t know what to say,” Sinclair told the audience. He asked the crowd to “say something to me,” and the night’s loudest cheer went up in an emotional outpouring.

For many, the musical highlight of the night came at one a.m. when a special, unannounced guest star hit the stage. Andrews says he had only learned about the late addition a few days earlier.

“I was sitting in the office and the phone rings,” Andrews recalls. “It’s Stevie Wonder. After we got John Lennon, nothing’s going to surprise me, and Stevie Wonder said he wanted to be part of it.”

Wonder – a Motown success beginning at age thirteen whose musical genius shone early and bright – was careful with his politics. Andrews said the singer wanted to make it clear that he neither advocated nor supported the use of drugs, but that “he knew what they did to Sinclair and it wasn’t too nice.”

Wonder launched into “For Once in My Life.” Backstage, Lennon’s ears perked up; he hadn’t known the Motown star was on the bill. Lennon scrambled to find Andrews and get near the stage.

“Stevie Wonder is here?” Lennon cried in disbelief. “I gotta see him.”

Andrews hesitated, picturing John Lennon in the crowd.

“You don’t parade a Beatle around the audience,” Andrews told the star.

“You have to understand,” Lennon ex-

plained, “Stevie Wonder is my Beatles.”

A squad of security men formed a circle and Lennon was brought through the tunnel to the side of the stage. It wasn't long before people nearby took their eyes off Wonder and gasped in recognition. Crowds formed, too close for Andrews's comfort.

“I told John it was getting messy, and like a trooper he obeyed,” Andrews recalls. “He thanked me . . . he was like a kid, seeing Stevie Wonder.”

Wonder was uncharacteristically blunt about his politics and music that night. He played Sly Stone's “Somebody's Watching You,” which he dedicated to the FBI and “any of the undercover agents who might be out in the audience.” Addressing the reason for the concert, Wonder questioned a justice system that jailed Sinclair while the Ohio National Guard faced no charges: “A man gets ten years in prison for possession of marijuana, and another can kill four students at Kent State and walk free. What kind of shit is that? Sometimes I get very disgusted and very discouraged.”

Eight hours after the concert started, Lennon took the stage for a short set of four as-yet-unrecorded songs: “Attica State,” “The Luck of the Irish,” “Sisters O Sisters,” and the evening's tribute ballad, “John Sinclair.” Lennon was introduced by David Peel, who sang a song in their honor before the introduction.

(“John Lennon, Yoko Ono, New York City is your friend,” he chanted in his deadpan style.)

Lennon walked on with limited fanfare to enthusiastic applause, wearing a leather jacket and sunglasses and carrying two guitars. Onstage, Lennon introduced “Attica State,” which he explained he had started writing “as an ad lib” during his thirty-first birthday celebration in October, but since then “we finished it up.” A sound check – “hello, hello” into the microphone – gave way to a thumping start to the song.

The performance wasn't among Lennon's best, a fact obvious to everyone including the



Commemorative poster reprinted after the 1973 John Sinclair Freedom concert - the names of Stevie Wonder and Bob Seger did not appear on the original poster

singer. Several times during the set Lennon conferred mid-song with his back-up players, visibly frustrated. Some of the reviews were critical: “Hardly worth the wait,” wrote Bill Gray in the *Detroit News*. Gray wasn't impressed with the “unfamiliar” songs or Yoko's vocal on “Sisters O Sisters.”

Lennon prefaced “John Sinclair” with a few remarks. He tuned his steel guitar while he addressed the crowd, speaking to his friends plain and simple as he always did. He was there to help Sinclair, of course, and “spotlight what's going on,” but the message he wanted to spread was bigger than just one man in prison.

Lennon's speech was a keynote for a new era. He wanted people to know that passive indifference and benign protest belonged back in the sixties with the Beatles records.

“Apathy isn't it . . . we can do something. So flower power didn't work,” Lennon shrugged. “So what, we start again.”

Lennon sang: “Free John now, if we can, from the clutches of the man.”

About forty-eight hours later they did just that. **CT**

Eight hours after the concert started, Lennon took the stage for a short set of four as-yet-unrecorded songs: “Attica State,” “The Luck of the Irish,” “Sisters O Sisters,” and the evening's tribute ballad, “John Sinclair”



Barber wears a flowery shirt to brighten up the surroundings at a roadside stand at Dieploost, Johannesburg.

A close shave

Your barber shop is not just for ‘short back and sides’. It’s a church of masculinity, a place where men can be men. Photos by Alon Skuy, words by Yolise Mkele in Johannesburg

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“Styles range from the ‘Malcolm X’ to the ‘Dingaan Thobela’ and encompass anything that can be done with a razor
.....

There are few places in life where a man can just be, well . . . a man. Used to be the local bar, but they’ve either gone or been taken over by the chattering classes. All that’s left, it seems, is the barber’s shop.

For many men, trusting someone to take clippers to your cranial plumage is much like choosing a wife. It begins with a single tentative tryst. Then, once trust is gained and the relationship is established, the relationship can last for life.

In the case of some of the customers at Tony and Karmen Italian Hairstylists, in Birnam, Johannesburg, it can even be a multigenerational affair. Stuart Sheppard,



Bennies Hairdresser, Newlands, Johannesburg: Deon Greyvenstein cuts the hair of Mr Cornelius whose wife patiently awaits.





Adam Yassin, from Malawi, cuts a customer's hair at International Hair Cut Barber Shop, Jeppe, Johannesburg.



George Giannetakis, from Greece, cuts the hair of Nick Bruss at Colonia Barber Shop, Illovo, Johannesburg.



Kopilds Deshi, from Bangladesh, inside his shop, Deshi Hair Salon, Fordsborg, Johannesburg.

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"Barbershops
are not just about
cutting hair. They
are an experience"
.....

who co-owns the shop with Harry Sutherland and Nick Scarcella, has been shaving, shearing and styling men's hair for the better part of half a century.

Sheppard says: "Barbershops are not just about cutting hair. They are an experience."

Nearby, on Corlett Drive, the man simply known as AJ and the owner of J's Classic Barbershop offers a different kind of experience for men. Surrounded by pictures of famous African-American celebrities, AJ's customers are serenaded by the sweet sounds of hip-hop music and jocular con-



Johnson Mkinga, from Tanzania, at the Kiumeni Barber Shop, Johannesburg.



Fred Moss, owner of Scala Barber Shop, finds time for a smoke outside his shop in Melville, Johannesburg.



Looking good at J's Classic Barber Shop, Corlette Drive, Johannesburg.

versation.

“Hip-hop is a big part of who we are. We take American styles and give them an African flavour,” says AJ. Glued to his mirrors are pictures of South African celebrities who have their hair cut at his barbershop. They include the captain of South Africa’s

soccer team Itumeleng Khune, soccer legend Benni McCarthy and South African hip-hop star AKA.

Far removed from the bling of J’s Classic Barbershop is a rickety red gazebo decorated with paintings promoting the styles on offer. These range from the “Malcolm X”

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“We take American styles and give them an African flavour”
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PHOTO ESSAY



Tony and Karmen Hairstylists, Corlette Drive, Johannesburg. Barber, Nick Scardella cuts the hair of Ashton Mervis (5).



A man is reflected in the window of an outdoor barbershop in Jeppe, Johannesburg.



Vyera Maseko, answers the phone at Chris For Men, Hyde Park Corner, Johannesburg.

.....
The patient buzz of clippers can be heard separating hair from head
.....

to the “Dingaan Thobela” and encompass anything that can be done with a razor. This is the office of Raul Makome, situated on a strip on Koma Street in Jabulani, Soweto. Makome has the unobtrusive skill required of a barber. There is a manly grace about the way in which he slides the teeth

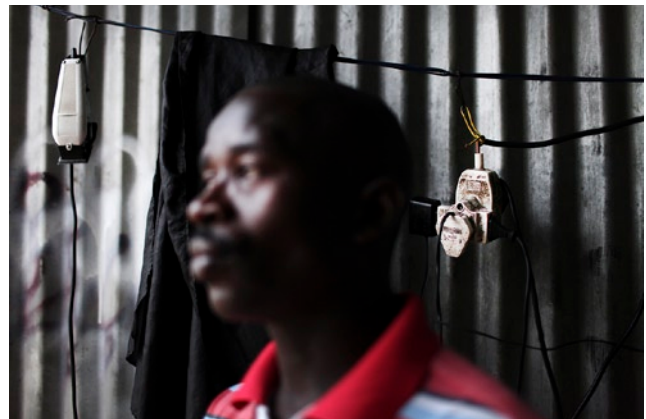
of his clippers over a head while engaging in light-hearted conversation. As in barbershops all over Johannesburg, the patient buzz of clippers can be heard separating hair from head as an ever-chatting Makome beautifies his customers. This is perhaps the allure of barbershops:



Clement Edison, from Tanzania, cuts the hair of Tebogo Letlape at J's Classic Barber Shop, Corlette Drive.



A customer sits for a haircut in a tent, near the train tracks in Central Johannesburg.



Martin Ndlovu at Ndlovu's Barber Shop, opposite Cresta Shopping Centre, Johannesburg.

they are a watering hole for the males of our species and come in as many shapes and sizes as the men for whom they cater.

They are a place where men can sit, discuss women and sport, throwing in the odd dirty joke. All of this while making them more desirable to those fair creatures.

And there's nothing more important than that. Is there?

CT

Alon Skuy won the newspaper picture story category at the Pictures of the Year International contest. This story originally appeared in South Africa's Times newspaper

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They are a place where men can sit, discuss women and sport
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War can be ended

An excerpt from David Swanson's new book,
War No More: The Case For Abolition

By the end of the nineteenth century, slavery was outlawed nearly everywhere and rapidly on the decline

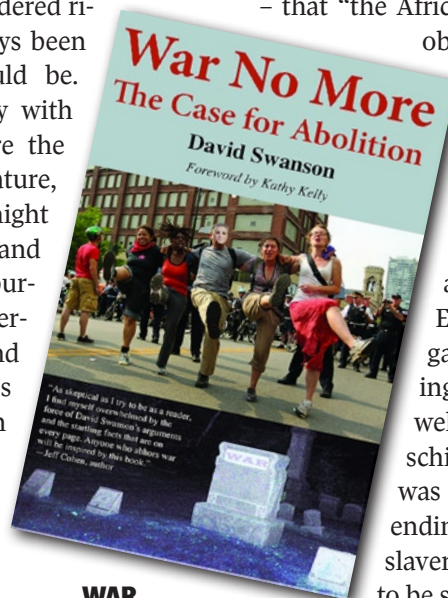
Slavery Was Abolished

In the late eighteenth century the majority of people alive on earth were held in slavery or serfdom (three-quarters of the earth's population, in fact, according to the *Encyclopedia of Human Rights* from Oxford University Press). The idea of abolishing something so pervasive and long-lasting as slavery was widely considered ridiculous. Slavery had always been with us and always would be. One couldn't wish it away with naive sentiments or ignore the mandates of our human nature, unpleasant though they might be. Religion and science and history and economics all purported to prove slavery's permanence, acceptability, and even desirability. Slavery's existence in the Christian Bible justified it in the eyes of many. In Ephesians 6:5 St. Paul instructed slaves to obey their earthly masters as they obeyed Christ.

Slavery's prevalence also allowed the argument that if one country didn't do it another country would: "Some gentlemen may, indeed, object to the slave trade as inhuman and evil,"

said a member of the British Parliament on May 23, 1777, "but let us consider that, if our colonies are to be cultivated, which can only be done by African Negroes, it is surely better to supply ourselves with those labourers in British ships, than buy them from French, Dutch or Danish traders." On April 18, 1791, Banastre Tarleton declared in Parliament – and, no doubt, some even believed him – that "the Africans themselves have no objection to the trade."

By the end of the nineteenth century, slavery was outlawed nearly everywhere and rapidly on the decline. In part, this was because a handful of activists in England in the 1780s began a movement advocating for abolition, a story well told in Adam Hochschild's *Bury the Chains*. This was a movement that made ending the slave trade and slavery a moral cause, a cause to be sacrificed for on behalf of distant, unknown people very different from oneself. It was a movement of public pressure. It did not use violence and it did not use voting. Most people had no right to vote. Instead it used



WAR NO MORE
The Case for Abolition
David Swanson
(Davidswanson.org)
\$15
(ebook version \$2)

so-called naive sentiments and the active ignoring of the supposed mandates of our supposed human nature. It changed the culture, which is, of course, what regularly inflates and tries to preserve itself by calling itself “human nature.”

Other factors contributed to the demise of slavery, including the resistance of the people enslaved. But such resistance was not new in the world. Widespread condemnation of slavery – including by former slaves – and a commitment not to allow its return: that was new and decisive.

Those ideas spread by forms of communication we now consider primitive. There is some evidence that in this age of instant global communication we can spread worthy ideas much more quickly.

So, is slavery gone? Yes and no. While owning another human being is banned and in disrepute around the world, forms of bondage still exist in certain places. There is not a hereditary caste of people enslaved for life, transported and bred and whipped openly by their owners, what might be called “traditional slavery.” Sadly, however, debt slavery and sex slavery hide in various countries. There are pockets of slavery of various sorts in the United States. There is prison labour, with the labourers disproportionately being descendants of former slaves. There are more African-Americans behind bars or under supervision by the criminal justice system in the United States today than there were African-Americans enslaved in the United States in 1850.

But these modern evils don’t convince anybody that slavery, in any form, is a permanent fixture in our world, and they shouldn’t. Most African-Americans are not imprisoned. Most workers in the world are not enslaved in any type of slavery. In 1780, if you had proposed making slavery the exception to the rule, a scandal to be carried out in secret, hidden away and disguised where it still existed in any form, you would have been considered as naive and ignorant as someone proposing the complete elimi-

nation of slavery. If you were to propose bringing back slavery in a major way today, most people would denounce the idea as backward and barbaric.

All forms of slavery may not have been completely eliminated, and may never be. But they could be. Or, on the other hand, traditional slavery could be returned to popular acceptance and restored to prominence in a generation or two. Look at the rapid revival in acceptance of the use of torture in the early twenty-first century for an example of how a practice that some societies had begun to leave behind has been significantly restored. In this moment, however, it is clear to most people that slavery is a choice and that its abolition is an option – that, in fact, its abolition always was an option, even if a difficult one.

A good Civil War?

In the United States some may have a tendency to doubt the abolition of slavery as a model for the abolition of war because war was used to end slavery. But did it have to be used? Would it have to be used today? Slavery was ended without war, through compensated emancipation, in the British colonies, Denmark, France, the Netherlands, and most of South America and the Caribbean. That model worked also in Washington, D.C. Slave owning states in the United States rejected it, most of them choosing secession instead. That’s the way history went, and many people would have had to think very differently for it to have gone otherwise. But the cost of freeing the slaves by buying them would have been far less than the North spent on the war, not counting what the South spent, not counting the deaths and injuries, mutilations, trauma, destruction, and decades of bitterness to come, while slavery long remained nearly real in all but name. (See *Costs of Major US Wars*, by the Congressional Research Service, June 29, 2010.)

On June 20, 2013, the *Atlantic* published

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If tomorrow we were to wake up and discover everyone appropriately outraged over the horror of mass incarceration, would it help to find some large fields in which to kill each other off in large numbers?
.....

an article called “No, Lincoln Could Not Have ‘Bought the Slaves.’” Why not? Well, the slave owners didn’t want to sell. That’s perfectly true. They didn’t, not at all. But the *Atlantic* focuses on another argument, namely that it would have just been too expensive, costing as much as \$3 billion (in 1860s money). Yet, if you read closely – it’s easy to miss it – the author admits that the war cost over twice that much. The cost of freeing people was simply unaffordable. Yet the cost – over twice as much – of killing people, goes by almost unnoticed. As with well-fed people’s appetites for desserts, there seems to be a completely separate compartment for war spending, a compartment kept far away from criticism or even questioning.

The point is not so much that our ancestors could have made a different choice (they were nowhere near doing so), but that their choice looks foolish from our point of view. If tomorrow we were to wake up and discover everyone appropriately outraged over the horror of mass incarceration, would it help to find some large fields in which to kill each other off in large numbers? What would that have to do with abolishing prisons? And what did the Civil War have to do with abolishing slavery? If – radically contrary to actual history – US slave owners had opted to end slavery without war, it’s hard to imagine that as a bad decision.

Let me try to really, really emphasize this point: what I am describing DID NOT happen and was not about to happen, was nowhere remotely close to happening; but its happening would have been a good thing. Had slave owners and politicians radically altered their thinking and chosen to end slavery without a war, they would have ended it with less suffering, and probably ended it more completely. In any case, to imagine slavery ending without war, we need only look at the actual history of various other countries. And to imagine big changes being made in our society today (whether it’s closing prisons, creating solar arrays, rewrit-

ing the Constitution, facilitating sustainable agriculture, publicly financing elections, developing democratic media outlets, or anything else – you may not like any of these ideas, but I’m sure you can think of a major change that you would like) we don’t tend to include as Step 1 “Find large fields in which to make our children kill each other in huge numbers.” Instead, we skip right by that to Step 2 “Do the thing that needs doing.” And so we should.

.....
Existence precedes essence

To any philosopher sharing Jean Paul Sartre’s outlook on the world there is no need to demonstrate the virtual abolition of slavery in order to be convinced that slavery is optional. We’re human beings, and for Sartre that means we’re free. Even when enslaved, we’re free. We can choose not to speak, not to eat, not to drink, not to have sex. As I was writing this, large numbers of prisoners were engaged in a hunger strike in California and in Guantanamo Bay and in Palestine (and they were in touch with each other). Everything is optional, always has been, always will be. If we can choose not to eat, we can certainly choose not to engage in the extensive effort, requiring the collaboration of many people, to establish or maintain the institution of slavery. From this viewpoint it is simply obvious that we can choose not to enslave people. We can choose universal love or cannibalism or whatever we see fit. Parents tell their children, “You can be anything you choose to be,” and the same must also be true of the assembled collection of everyone’s children.

I think the above viewpoint, naive as it may sound, is essentially right. It doesn’t mean that future events are not physically determined by past ones. It means that, from the perspective of a non-omniscient human being, choices are available. This doesn’t mean you can choose to have physical abilities or talents you don’t have. It doesn’t mean you can choose how the rest

of the world behaves. You can't choose to have a billion dollars or win a gold medal or get elected president. But you can choose to be the sort of person who wouldn't own a billion dollars while others starved, or the sort of person who would do just that and focus on owning two billion dollars. You can choose your own behavior. You can give winning a gold medal or getting rich or getting elected your best effort or a half-hearted effort or no effort at all. You can be the sort of person who obeys illegal or immoral orders, or the sort of person who defies them. You can be the sort of person who tolerates or encourages something like slavery or the sort of person who struggles to abolish it even as many others support it. And because we can each choose to abolish it, I will argue, we can collectively choose to abolish it.

There are a number of ways in which someone might disagree with this. Perhaps, they might suggest, some powerful force prevents us all from collectively choosing what we might each choose as an individual in a moment of calm clarity. This force could simply be a sort of social irrationality or the inevitable influence of sycophants on the powerful. Or it could be the pressure of economic competition or population density or resource shortages. Or perhaps some segment of our population is sick or damaged in a way that compels them to create the institution of slavery. These individuals could impose the institution of slavery on the rest of the world. Perhaps the slavery-inclined portion of the population includes all males, and women are unable to overcome the masculine drive toward slavery. Maybe the corruption of power, combined with the self-selection of those inclined to seek power makes destructive public policies inevitable. Maybe the influence of profiteers and the skill of propagandists render us helpless to resist. Or perhaps a large portion of the globe could be organized to end slavery, but some other society would always bring slavery back like a contagious

disease, and ending it simultaneously everywhere would just not be feasible. Maybe capitalism inevitably produces slavery, and capitalism is itself inevitable. Maybe human destructiveness targeted toward the natural environment necessitates slavery. Maybe racism or nationalism or religion or xenophobia or patriotism or exceptionalism or fear or greed or a general lack of empathy is itself inevitable and guarantees slavery no matter how hard we try to think and act our way out of it.

These sorts of claims for inevitability sound less persuasive when addressed to an institution that has already been largely eliminated, like slavery. I'll address them below with regard to the institution of war. Certain of these theories – population density, resource scarcity, etc. – are more popular among academics who look to non-Western nations as the primary source for war making. Other theories, such as the influence of what President Dwight Eisenhower called the military industrial complex, are more popular among discouraged peace activists in the United States. It's not unusual, however, to hear supporters of US wars cite the supposed need to fight for resources and "lifestyle" as a justification for wars that have been presented on television as having entirely different motivations. I will hope to make clear that claims for the inevitability of slavery or war have no basis in fact, whichever institution they are applied to. The plausibility of this argument will be helped if we first consider just how many venerable institutions we have already left behind.

Blood feuds and duels

Nobody in the United States is proposing to bring back blood feuds, revenge killings of members of one family by members of a different family. Such retaliatory slaughters were once a common and accepted practice in Europe and are still very much around in some parts of the world. The infamous

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Have we stopped killing the neighbors over stolen pigs or inherited grievances because a mysterious force that compels us to kill has been redirected into killing foreigners through war?
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Hatfields and McCoys have not drawn each other's blood for over a century. In 2003, these two US families finally signed a truce. Blood feuds in the United States had long since been effectively stigmatized and rejected by a society that believed it could do better and has done better.

Sadly, one of the McCoys involved in signing the truce made less than ideal comments, while the United States waged war in Iraq. According to the *Orlando Sentinel*, "Reo Hatfield of Waynesboro, Va., came up with the idea as a proclamation of peace. The broader message it sends to the world, he said, is that when national security is at risk, Americans put their differences aside and stand united." According to CBS News, "Reo said after Sept. 11 he wanted to make an official statement of peace between the two families to show that if the most deep-seeded [sic] family feud can be mended, so can the nation unite to protect its freedom." The nation. Not the world. "Protect freedom" in June 2003 was code for "fight war," regardless of whether the war, like most wars, reduced our freedoms.

Have we remade family blood feuds as national blood feuds? Have we stopped killing the neighbors over stolen pigs or inherited grievances because a mysterious force that compels us to kill has been redirected into killing foreigners through war? Would Kentucky go to war with West Virginia, and Indiana with Illinois, if they couldn't go to war with Afghanistan instead? Is Europe finally at peace with itself only because it's constantly helping the United States attack places like Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya? Didn't President George W. Bush justify a war on Iraq in some part by alleging that Iraq's president had tried to kill Bush's father? Doesn't the United States treat Cuba as though the Cold War never ended largely because of sheer inertia? After he killed a US citizen named Anwar al-Awlaki, didn't President Barack Obama send another missile two weeks later that killed Awlaki's 16-year-old son, against whom no accusa-

tions of wrong doing have ever been made? If – bizarre coincidence though it would be – the younger Awlaki was targeted without having been identified, or if he and the other young people with him were killed through pure recklessness, doesn't the resemblance to blood feuds still hold?

Certainly, but a resemblance is not an equivalence. Blood feuds, as they were, are gone from US culture and many other cultures around the world. Blood feuds were, at one point, considered normal, natural, admirable, and permanent. They were required by tradition and honor, by family and morality. But, in the United States and many other places, they are gone. Their vestiges remain. Blood feuds appear again in milder form, without the blood, sometimes with lawyers substituted for shotguns. Traces of blood feuds attach themselves to current practices, such as war, or gang violence, or criminal prosecutions and sentencings. But blood feuds are in no way central to existing wars, they don't cause wars, the wars don't follow their logic. Blood feuds have not been transformed into war or anything else. They've been abolished. War existed before and after the elimination of blood feuds, and had more similarities to blood feuds prior to their elimination than after. The governments that fight wars have internally imposed a ban on violence, but the ban has only succeeded where people have accepted its authority, where people have agreed that blood feuds must be left behind us. There are parts of the world where people have not accepted that.

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Dueling

Revival of dueling seems even less likely than a return to slavery or blood feuds. Duels were once commonplace in Europe and the United States. Militaries, including the US Navy, used to lose more officers to dueling among themselves than to combat with a foreign enemy. Dueling was banned, stigmatized, mocked, and rejected during the

nineteenth century as a barbaric practice. People collectively decided it could be left behind, and it was.

No one proposed to eliminate aggressive or unjust dueling while keeping defensive or humanitarian dueling in place. The same can be said of blood feuds and slavery. These practices were rejected as a whole, not modified or civilized. We don't have Geneva Conventions to regulate proper slavery or civilized blood feuds. Slavery wasn't maintained as an acceptable practice for some people. Blood feuds were not tolerated for certain special families who needed to be prepared to fend off the irrational or evil families who couldn't be reasoned with. Dueling has not remained legal and acceptable for particular personages. The United Nations doesn't authorize duels the way it authorizes wars. Dueling, in the countries that formerly engaged in it, is understood to be a destructive, backward, primitive, and ignorant way for individuals to try to settle their disputes. Whatever insult someone may hurl at you is almost certain to be milder – as we view things today – than an accusation of being so stupid and vicious as to participate in duels. Therefore dueling is no longer a means to protect one's reputation from insult.

Does the occasional duel still happen? Probably, but so does the occasional (or not so occasional) murder, rape, and theft. No one is proposing to legalize those, and nobody is proposing to bring back dueling. We generally try to teach our children to settle their disputes with words, not fists or weapons. When we can't work things out, we ask friends or a supervisor or the police or a court or some other authority to arbitrate or impose a ruling. We haven't eliminated disputes between individuals, but we have learned that we're all better off settling them nonviolently. At some level most of us understand that even the person who might have been victorious in a duel but who loses in a court ruling is still better off. That person does not have to live in as violent a

world, does not have to suffer from his "victory," does not have to witness the suffering of his adversary's loved ones, does not have to seek satisfaction or "closure" in vain through the elusive sensation of vengeance, does not have to fear any loved one's death or injury in a duel, and does not have to stay prepared for his own next duel to come.

International Duels: Spain, Afghanistan, Iraq

What if war is as bad a way to settle international disputes as dueling is to settle interpersonal disputes? The similarities are perhaps sharper than we care to imagine. Duels were contests between pairs of men who had decided that their disagreements could not be settled by speaking. Of course, we know better. They could have resolved matters by speaking, but chose not to. No one was obliged to fight a duel because someone he was arguing with was irrational. Anyone who chose to fight a duel wanted to fight a duel, and was himself – therefore – impossible for the other person to talk to.

Wars are contests between nations (even when described as being fought against something like "terror") – nations unable to settle their disagreements by speaking. We ought to know better. Nations could resolve their disputes by speaking, but choose not to. No nation is obliged to fight a war because another nation is irrational. Any nation that chooses to fight a war wanted to fight a war, and was itself – therefore – impossible for the other nation to talk to. This is the pattern we see in many US wars.

The good side (our own side, of course) in a war, we like to believe, has been compelled into it because the other side understands only violence. You just can't talk to Iranians, for example. It would be nice if you could, but this is the real world, and in the real world certain nations are run by mythical monsters incapable of rational thought!

Let's assume for the sake of argument that governments make war because the

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other side won't be reasonable and talk to them. Many of us don't actually believe this is true. We see war-making as driven by irrational desires and greed, war justifications as packages of lies. I actually wrote a book called *War Is A Lie* surveying the most common types of lies about wars. But, for the sake of a comparison with dueling, let's look at the case for war as a last resort when talking fails, and see how it holds up. And let's look at cases involving the United States, as they are most familiar to many of us and somewhat familiar to many others, and as the United States (as I'll discuss below) is the world's leading maker of war.

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Spain

The theory that war is a last resort used against those who cannot be reasoned with does not hold up well. The Spanish-American War (1898), for example, doesn't quite fit. Spain was willing to submit to the judgment of any neutral arbiter, after the United States accused the Spanish of blowing up a ship called the USS Maine, but the United States was insistent upon going to war despite having no evidence to support its accusations against Spain, accusations that served as the war's justification. To make sense of our theory of war we have to place Spain in the role of rational actor and the United States in the role of lunatic. That can't be right.

Seriously: it can't be right. The United States was not run by and was not inhabited by lunatics. Sometimes it can be hard to see in what way lunatics could do worse than our elected officials are doing, but the fact remains that Spain was not dealing with subhuman monsters, merely with Americans. And the United States was not dealing with subhuman monsters, merely with Spaniards. The matter could have been settled around a table, and one side even made that proposal. The fact is that the United States wanted war, and there was nothing the Spanish could say to prevent it.

The United States chose war, just as a dueler chose to duel.

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Afghanistan

Examples spring to mind from more recent history too, not just from centuries gone by. The United States, for three years prior to September 11, 2001, had been asking the Taliban to turn over Osama bin Laden. The Taliban had asked for evidence of his guilt of any crimes and a commitment to try him in a neutral third country without the death penalty. This continued right into October, 2001. (See, for example "Bush Rejects Taliban Offer to Hand Bin Laden Over" in the *Guardian*, October 14, 2001.) The Taliban's demands don't seem irrational or crazy. They seem like the demands of someone with whom negotiations might be continued. The Taliban also warned the United States that bin Laden was planning an attack on US soil (this according to the BBC). Former Pakistani Foreign Secretary Niaz Naik told the BBC that senior US officials told him at a U.N.-sponsored summit in Berlin in July 2001 that the United States would take action against the Taliban in mid-October. He said it was doubtful that surrendering bin Laden would change those plans. When the United States attacked Afghanistan on October 7, 2001, the Taliban asked again to negotiate handing over bin Laden to a third country to be tried. The United States rejected the offer and continued a war in Afghanistan for many years, not halting it when bin Laden was believed to have left that country, and not even halting it after announcing bin Laden's death. (See *Foreign Policy Journal*, September 20, 2010.) Perhaps there were other reasons to keep the war going for a dozen years, but clearly the reason to begin it was not that no other means of resolving the dispute were available. Clearly the United States wanted war.

Why would someone want war? As I argue in *War Is A Lie*, the United States wasn't so much seeking vengeance for Spain's

supposed destruction of the Maine as grabbing an opportunity to conquer territories. Invading Afghanistan had little or nothing to do with bin Laden or a government that had helped bin Laden. Rather, US motivations were related to fossil fuel pipelines, the positioning of weaponry, political posturing, geopolitical posturing, maneuvering toward an invasion of Iraq (Tony Blair told Bush Afghanistan had to come first), patriotic cover for power grabs and unpopular policies at home, and profiteering from war and its expected spoils. The United States wanted war.

The United States has less than 5 percent of the world's population but uses one-third of the world's paper, a quarter of the world's oil, 23 percent of the coal, 27 percent of the aluminum, and 19 percent of the copper. (See *Scientific American*, September 14, 2012.) That state of affairs cannot be indefinitely continued through diplomacy. "The hidden hand of the market will never work without a hidden fist. McDonald's cannot flourish without McDonnell Douglas, the designer of the US Air Force F-15. And the hidden fist that keeps the world safe for Silicon Valley's technologies to flourish is called the US Army, Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps," says hidden hand enthusiast and New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman. But greed is not an argument for the other guy's irrationality or viciousness. It's just greed. We've all seen young children and even older people learn to be less greedy. There are also paths toward sustainable energies and local economies that lead away from wars of greed without leading to suffering or impoverishment. Most calculations of large-scale conversion to green energy don't take into account the transfer of enormous resources from the military. We'll discuss what ending war makes possible below. The point here is that war does not deserve to be considered more respectable than dueling.

Was war inevitable from the point of view of Afghans, who found the United States

uninterested in negotiations? Certainly not. While violent resistance has failed to end the war for over a decade, it is possible that nonviolent resistance would have been more successful. We can benefit, as those in centuries past could not, from the history of nonviolent resistance in the Arab Spring, in Eastern Europe, in South Africa, in India, in Central America, in successful efforts by Filipinos and Puerto Ricans to close US military bases, etc.

Lest this sound like I am just offering unwanted advice to Afghans while my government bombs them, I should point out that the same lesson can apply in my country as well. The US public supports or tolerates the spending (through a variety of departments – consult the War Resisters League or the National Priorities Project) of over \$1 trillion every year on war preparations precisely because of the fear (fantastical though it may be) of an invasion of the United States by a foreign power. Should that happen, the foreign power involved would likely be destroyed by US weapons. But, were we to dismantle those weapons, we would not – contrary to popular opinion – be left defenseless. We would be able to refuse our cooperation with the occupation. We could recruit fellow resisters from the invading nation and human shields from around the world. We could pursue justice through public opinion, courts, and sanctions targeted at the individuals responsible.

In reality, it is the United States and NATO that invade others. The war on and occupation of Afghanistan, if we step back from it just a little, appears as barbaric as a duel. Punishing a government willing (on certain reasonable conditions) to turn over an accused criminal, by spending well over a decade bombing and killing that nation's people (most of whom had never heard of the attacks of September 11, 2001, much less supported them, and most of whom hated the Taliban) doesn't appear to be a significantly more civilized action than shooting a neighbor because his great-uncle stole your

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Greed is not an argument for the other guy's irrationality or viciousness. It's just greed

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The US plan was to attack infrastructure and densely populated areas with such fury that, contrary to all past experience, the people would be “shocked and awed” – another word would be terrorized – into submission
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grandfather’s pig. In fact war kills a lot more people than blood feuds. Twelve years later, the US government, as I write this, is trying to negotiate with the Taliban – a flawed process in that the people of Afghanistan are not well-represented by either party in the negotiations, but a process which could have better taken place 12 years earlier. If you can talk to them now, why couldn’t you talk to them then, prior to the elaborate mass-duel? If a war on Syria can be avoided, why couldn’t a war on Afghanistan?

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Iraq
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Then there’s the case of Iraq in March 2003. The United Nations had refused to authorize an attack on Iraq, just as it had refused two years earlier with Afghanistan. Iraq was not threatening the United States. The United States possessed and was preparing to use against Iraq all sorts of internationally condemned weaponry: white phosphorous, new kinds of napalm, cluster bombs, depleted uranium. The US plan was to attack infrastructure and densely populated areas with such fury that, contrary to all past experience, the people would be “shocked and awed” – another word would be terrorized – into submission. And the justification put forth for this was Iraq’s supposed possession of chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons.

Unfortunately for these plans, a process of international inspections had rid Iraq of such weapons years before and confirmed their absence. Inspections were underway, re-confirming the complete absence of such weapons, when the United States announced that the war would begin and the inspectors must leave. The war was needed, the US government claimed, to overthrow the government of Iraq – to remove Saddam Hussein from power. However, according to a transcript of a meeting in February 2003 between President George W. Bush and the Prime Minister of Spain, Bush said that Hussein had offered to leave Iraq, and to go

into exile, if he could keep \$1 billion. (See *El Pais*, September 26, 2007, or the *Washington Post* of the following day.) The *Washington Post* commented: “Although Bush’s public position at the time of the meeting was that the door remained open for a diplomatic solution, hundreds of thousands of US troops had already been deployed to Iraq’s border, and the White House had made its impatience clear. ‘Time is short,’ Bush said in a news conference with [Spanish Prime Minister Jose Maria] Aznar the same day.”

Perhaps a dictator being allowed to flee with \$1 billion is not an ideal outcome. But the offer was not revealed to the US public. We were told that diplomacy was impossible. Negotiation was impossible, we were told. (Thus, there was no opportunity to make a counter offer of a half a billion dollars, for example.) Inspections hadn’t worked, they said. The weapons were there and could be used at any moment against us, they said. War, regretfully, tragically, sorrowfully was the last resort, they told us. President Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair spoke at the White House on January 31, 2003, claiming that war would be avoided if at all possible, just after a private meeting in which Bush had suggested flying U2 reconnaissance aircraft with fighter cover over Iraq, painted in U.N. colors, and hoping Iraq would fire on them, as that would supposedly have been grounds to start the war. (See *Lawless World* by Phillippe Sands, and the extensive media coverage collected at <http://WarIsACrime.org/WhiteHouseMemo>)

Rather than losing a billion dollars, the people of Iraq lost an estimated 1.4 million lives, saw 4.5 million people made refugees, their nation’s infrastructure and education and health systems destroyed, civil liberties lost that had existed even under Saddam Hussein’s brutal rule, environmental destruction almost beyond imagining, epidemics of disease and birth defects as horrific as the world has known. The nation of Iraq was destroyed. The cost to Iraq or to the United States in dollars was far more than

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Michael I. Niman
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a billion (the United States paid over \$800 billion, not counting trillions of dollars in increased fuel costs, future interest payments, veterans' care, and lost opportunities). (See <http://DavidSwanson.org/Iraq>) None of this was done because Iraq couldn't be reasoned with.

The US government, at the top level, wasn't motivated by the fictional weapons at all. And it's not actually the place of the US government to decide for Iraq whether its dictator flees. The US government should have worked on ending its support for dictators in many other countries before interfering with Iraq in a new way. The option existed of ending the economic sanctions and bombings and beginning to make reparations. But if the United States' stated motivations had been its real ones, we could conclude that talking was an option that should have been chosen. Nego-

tiating Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait had been an option at the time of the First Gulf War as well. Choosing not to support and empower Hussein had been an option earlier still. There is always an alternative to backing violence. This is true even from the Iraqi point of view. Resistance to oppression can be nonviolent or violent.

Examine any war you like, and it turns out that if the aggressors had wanted to state their desires openly, they could have entered into negotiations rather than into battle. Instead, they wanted war – war for its own sake, or war for completely indefensible reasons that no other nation would willingly agree to.

CT

David Swanson's books include "War Is A Lie." He blogs at davidswanson.org and warisacrime.org and works for the online activist organization rootsaction.org

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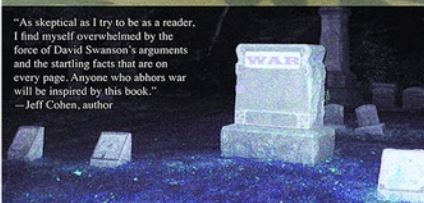
War No More The Case for Abolition

David Swanson

Foreword by Kathy Kelly



"As skeptical as I try to be as a reader, I find myself overwhelmed by the force of David Swanson's arguments and the startling facts that are on every page. Anyone who abhors war will be inspired by this book."
—Jeff Cohen, author



"David Swanson despises war and lying, and unmasks them both with rare intelligence. I learn something new on every page." —Jeff Cohen, founder of FAIR and author of Cuba Now Confidential

WAR IS A LIE

DAVID SWANSON

author of *Daybreak: Undoing the Imperial Presidency*

WHEN THE WORLD OUTLAWED WAR



DAVID SWANSON

"David Swanson is a truth-teller and witness-bearer whose voice and action warrant our attention!" —Cornel West

DavidSwanson.org/Store

Let's get this class war started

Chris Hedges tells why the oligarchs who rule us won't be defeated by reason

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Once oligarchs achieve unchecked economic and political power, as they have in the United States, the citizens, too, become disposable
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The rich are different from us," F. Scott Fitzgerald is said to have remarked to Ernest Hemingway, to which Hemingway allegedly replied, "Yes, they have more money."

The exchange, although it never actually took place, sums up a wisdom Fitzgerald had that eluded Hemingway. The rich are different. The cocoon of wealth and privilege permits the rich to turn those around them into compliant workers, hangers-on, servants, flatterers and sycophants. Wealth breeds, as Fitzgerald illustrated in *The Great Gatsby* and his short story *The Rich Boy*, a class of people for whom human beings are disposable commodities. Colleagues, associates, employees, kitchen staff, servants, gardeners, tutors, personal trainers, even friends and family, bend to the whims of the wealthy or disappear. Once oligarchs achieve unchecked economic and political power, as they have in the United States, the citizens, too, become disposable.

The public face of the oligarchic class bears little resemblance to the private face. I, like Fitzgerald, was thrown into the embrace of the upper crust when young. I was shipped off as a scholarship student at the age of 10 to an exclusive New England boarding school. I had classmates whose fathers – fathers they rarely saw – arrived at the school in their limousines accompanied by personal photographers (and at

times their mistresses), so the press could be fed images of rich and famous men playing the role of good fathers. I spent time in the homes of the ultra-rich and powerful, watching my classmates, who were children, callously order around men and women who worked as their chauffeurs, cooks, nannies and servants. When the sons and daughters of the rich get into serious trouble there are always lawyers, publicists and political personages to protect them – George W. Bush's life is a case study in the insidious affirmative action for the rich. The rich have a snobbish disdain for the poor – despite well-publicized acts of philanthropy – and the middle class. These lower classes are viewed as uncouth parasites, annoyances that have to be endured, at times placated and always controlled in the quest to amass more power and money. My hatred of authority, along with my loathing for the pretensions, heartlessness and sense of entitlement of the rich, comes from living among the privileged. It was a deeply unpleasant experience. But it exposed me to their insatiable selfishness and hedonism. I learned, as a boy, who were my enemies.

The inability to grasp the pathology of our oligarchic rulers is one of our gravest faults. We have been blinded to the depravity of our ruling elite by the relentless propaganda of public relations firms that work on behalf of corporations and the rich.

Compliant politicians, clueless entertainers and our vapid, corporate-funded popular culture, which holds up the rich as leaders to emulate and assures us that through diligence and hard work we can join them, keep us from seeing the truth.

“They were careless people, Tom and Daisy,” Fitzgerald wrote of the wealthy couple at the center of Gatsby’s life. “They smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money or their vast carelessness, or whatever it was that kept them together, and let other people clean up the mess they had made.”

Aristotle, Niccolò Machiavelli, Alexis de Tocqueville, Adam Smith and Karl Marx all began from the premise there is a natural antagonism between the rich and the masses. “Those who have too much of the goods of fortune, strength, wealth, friends, and the like, are neither willing nor able to submit to authority,” Aristotle wrote in *Politics*. “The evil begins at home; for when they are boys, by reason of the luxury in which they are brought up, they never learn, even at school, the habit of obedience.” Oligarchs, these philosophers knew, are schooled in the mechanisms of manipulation, subtle and overt repression and exploitation to protect their wealth and power at our expense. Foremost among their mechanisms of control is the control of ideas. Ruling elites ensure that the established intellectual class is subservient to an ideology – in this case free market capitalism and globalization – that justifies their greed. “The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships,” Marx wrote, “the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas.”

The blanket dissemination of the ideology of free market capitalism through the media and the purging, especially in academia, of critical voices have permitted our oligarchs to orchestrate the largest income inequality gap in the industrialized world. The top 1 percent in the United States own 40 percent of the nation’s wealth while the

bottom 80 percent own only 7 percent, as Joseph E. Stiglitz wrote in *The Price of Inequality*. For every dollar that the wealthiest 0.1 percent amassed in 1980 they had an additional \$3 in yearly income in 2008, David Cay Johnston explained in the article “9 Things the Rich Don’t Want You to Know About Taxes.” The bottom 90 percent, Johnston said, in the same period added only one cent. Half of the country is now classified as poor or low-income. The real value of the minimum wage has fallen by \$2.77 since 1968. Oligarchs do not believe in self-sacrifice for the common good. They never have. They never will. They are the cancer of democracy.

“We Americans are not usually thought to be a submissive people, but of course we are,” Wendell Berry writes. “Why else would we allow our country to be destroyed? Why else would we be rewarding its destroyers? Why else would we all – by proxies we have given to greedy corporations and corrupt politicians – be participating in its destruction? Most of us are still too sane to piss in our own cistern, but we allow others to do so and we reward them for it. We reward them so well, in fact, that those who piss in our cistern are wealthier than the rest of us. How do we submit? By not being radical enough. Or by not being thorough enough, which is the same thing.”

Two routes

The rise of an oligarchic state offers a nation two routes, according to Aristotle. The impoverished masses either revolt to rectify the imbalance of wealth and power or the oligarchs establish a brutal tyranny to keep the masses forcibly enslaved. We have chosen the second of Aristotle’s options. The slow advances we made in the early 20th century through unions, government regulation, the New Deal, the courts, an alternative press and mass movements have been reversed. The oligarchs are turning us – as they did in the 19th century steel and textile

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factories – into disposable human beings. They are building the most pervasive security and surveillance apparatus in human history to keep us submissive.

This imbalance would not have disturbed most of our Founding Fathers. The Founding Fathers, largely wealthy slaveholders, feared direct democracy. They rigged our political process to thwart popular rule and protect the property rights of the native aristocracy. The masses were to be kept at bay. The Electoral College, the original power of the states to appoint senators, the disenfranchisement of women, Native Americans, African-Americans and men without property locked most people out of the democratic process at the beginning of the republic. We had to fight for our voice. Hundreds of workers were killed and thousands were wounded in our labour wars. The violence dwarfed the labour battles in any other industrialized nation. The democratic openings we achieved were fought for and paid for with the blood of abolitionists, African-Americans, suffragists, workers and those in the anti-war and civil rights movements. Our radical movements, repressed and ruthlessly dismantled in the name of anti-communism, were the real engines of equality and social justice. The squalor and suffering inflicted on workers by the oligarchic class in the 19th century is mirrored in the present, now that we have been stripped of protection. Dissent is once again a criminal act. The Mellons, Rockefellers and Carnegies at the turn of the last century sought to create a nation of masters and serfs. The modern corporate incarnation of this 19th century oligarchic elite has created a worldwide neofeudalism, where workers across the planet toil in misery while corporate oligarchs amass hundreds of millions in personal wealth.

Class struggle defines most of human history. Marx got this right. The sooner we realize that we are locked in deadly warfare with our ruling, corporate elite, the sooner

we will realize that these elites must be overthrown. The corporate oligarchs have now seized all institutional systems of power in the United States. Electoral politics, internal security, the judiciary, our universities, the arts and finance, along with nearly all forms of communication, are in corporate hands. Our democracy, with faux debates between two corporate parties, is meaningless political theater. There is no way within the system to defy the demands of Wall Street, the fossil fuel industry or war profiteers. The only route left to us, as Aristotle knew, is revolt.

It is not a new story. The rich, throughout history, have found ways to subjugate and re-subjugate the masses. And the masses, throughout history, have cyclically awoken to throw off their chains. The ceaseless fight in human societies between the despotic power of the rich and the struggle for justice and equality lies at the heart of Fitzgerald's novel, which uses the story of Gatsby to carry out a fierce indictment of capitalism. Fitzgerald was reading Oswald Spengler's *The Decline of the West* as he was writing *The Great Gatsby*. Spengler predicted that, as Western democracies calcified and died, a class of "monied thugs" would replace the traditional political elites. Spengler was right about that.

"There are only two or three human stories," Willa Cather wrote, "and they go on repeating themselves as fiercely as if they had never happened before."

"The seesaw of history has thrust the oligarchs once again into the sky. We sit humiliated and broken on the ground. It is an old battle. It has been fought over and over in human history. We never seem to learn. It is time to grab our pitchforks." **CT**

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

Launchpad for a revolution?

David Cromwell discusses the predictable media reaction after comedian Russell Brand's called for 'total revolution' during a recent interview with the BBC's Jeremy Paxman

When someone with interesting things to say is granted a high-profile media platform, it is wise to listen to what is being said and ask why they have been given such a platform. Comedian and actor Russell Brand's 10-minute interview by Jeremy Paxman on BBC's *Newsnight* last week was given considerable advance publicity and generated enormous reaction on social media and in the press, just as those media gatekeepers who selected Brand to appear would have wished.

The interview was hung on the hook of Brand's guest-editing of a special edition of *New Statesman*, the 'leftwing' weekly magazine owned by the multimillionaire Mike Danson. In a rambling 4500-word essay mixing political comment, spiritual insight, humour and trademark flowery wordplay, Brand called for a 'total revolution of consciousness and our entire social, political and economic system.'

'Apathy', he said, 'is a rational reaction to a system that no longer represents, hears or addresses the vast majority of people'. He rightly noted that the public is, however, 'far from impotent', adding: 'I take great courage from the groaning effort required to keep us down, the institutions that have to be fastidiously kept in place to maintain this duplicitous order.'

These were all good points. But one of these institutions, unmentioned even once in his long essay, is the BBC.

Last month, from the safe confines of the

Newsnight studio, Jeremy Paxman introduced his Russell Brand interview in archetypal world-weary mode like some kind of venerable patrician inviting a precocious, innocent upstart to join an exalted circle, just for a few moments. Paxman began by characterising Brand's *New Statesman* essay as a 'combination of distaste for mainstream politics and overweening vanity'. A *Newsnight* professional then flicked a switch and the prepared interview ran, filmed in an anonymous luxury hotel room. Paxman's line of attack was that Brand couldn't 'even be arsed to vote'.

It continued like this:

Jeremy Paxman: 'Well, how do you have any authority to talk about politics then?'

Russell Brand: 'Well I don't get my authority from this pre-existing paradigm which is quite narrow and only serves a few people. I look elsewhere for alternatives that might be of service to humanity. "Alternate" means alternative political systems.'

JP: [Sceptical look] 'They being?'

RB: 'Well, I've not invented it yet, Jeremy. I had to do a magazine last week. I had a lot on my plate. But here's the thing it shouldn't do. Shouldn't destroy the planet. Shouldn't create massive economic disparity. Shouldn't ignore the needs of the people. The burden of proof is on the people with the power, not people doing a magazine.'

JP: 'How do you imagine that people get power?'

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In a rambling 4500-word essay mixing political comment, spiritual insight, humour and trademark flowery wordplay, Brand called for a 'total revolution of consciousness and our entire social, political and economic system'

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Brand effectively contributed to the illusion that the BBC is a level platform for reasoned, vigorous and wide-ranging debate on the most serious issues affecting people and planet
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RB: ‘Well, I imagine there are hierarchical systems that have been preserved through generations.’

JP: ‘**They get power by being voted in. You can’t even be arsed to vote!**’

RB: ‘That’s quite a narrow prescriptive parameter that change is within the...’

JP: ‘**In a democracy that’s how it works.**’

Of course, Paxman’s establishment-friendly remarks may be attributed to playing devil’s advocate. But it seems clear that Paxman really does believe we live in a functioning democracy. Certainly, the BBC man has an embarrassing faith in the good intentions of our leaders. In 2009 he commented of the Iraq war: ‘As far as I personally was concerned, there came a point with the presentation of the so-called evidence, with the moment when Colin Powell sat down at the UN General Assembly and unveiled what he said was cast-iron evidence of things like mobile, biological weapon facilities and the like ...’

‘When I saw all of that, I thought, well, “We know that Colin Powell is an intelligent, thoughtful man, and a sceptical man. If he believes all this to be the case, then, you know, he’s seen the evidence; I haven’t.”’

‘Now that evidence turned out to be absolutely meaningless, but we only discover that after the event. So, you know, I’m perfectly open to the accusation that we were hood-winked. Yes, clearly we were.’

It is indeed ironic, then, that the gullible Paxman should cast himself as a hard-bitten realist challenging a well-intentioned but naïve fantasist.

As Media lens has noted before, the notion that we live in a proper democracy is a dangerous illusion maintained by a state-corporate media to which Paxman himself is a prominent contributor. Brand confronted Paxman directly about the limited choice of policies and politicians offered to the public:

‘Aren’t you bored? Aren’t you more bored than anyone? You’ve been talking year after year, listening to their lies, their nonsense – then it’s that one getting in, then it’s that one getting in. But the problem continues. Why are we go-

ing to continue to contribute to this façade?’

But that was about as far as Brand went. He had nothing to say about the insidious role of the BBC in maintaining support for the crushing economic and political system that is, as Brand stated, destroying the planet, creating massive economic disparity and ignoring the needs of the people. By agreeing to enter the lion’s den of a BBC interview, edited and packaged as a high-profile 10-minute segment on *Newsnight*, knowing that he would likely boost viewing figures amongst a target younger audience without drawing attention to these parameters, far less criticising them, Brand let a major component of state-corporate power off the hook. He effectively contributed to the illusion that the BBC is a level platform for reasoned, vigorous and wide-ranging debate on the most serious issues affecting people and planet.

This matters because, as we have noted before, the most effective propaganda systems provide opportunities for some dissent while the overwhelming pattern of media coverage strongly supports state-corporate aims. And the BBC, regarded by many people as the epitome of all that is good about Britain, is arguably the most powerful media institution in this equation. After all, the BBC is still the news source for the majority of the public, and thus the establishment-friendly window through which the population views domestic and world affairs. An opinion poll published in May 2013 showed that 58% of the British public regards the BBC as the most trustworthy news source, far higher than its closest rivals: ITV (14%), Sky News (6%), Channel 4 News (2%) and the *Guardian* (2%).

The irony is that Brand referred in the interview to the safety ‘valves’ that allow steam to be let off, keeping an unjust system in place. But he was only referring to recycling and driving ‘greener’ cars like the Prius which ‘stop us reaching the point where you think it’s enough now’. So when is it ‘enough now’ to draw attention to the destructive role played by powerful elite news media, most especially the BBC?

More than once, Brand backed off from putting Paxman and the BBC in the spotlight:

RB: ‘The planet is being destroyed. We are creating an underclass. We are exploiting poor people all over the world. And the genuine legitimate problems of the people are not being addressed by our political class.’

JP: ‘All of these things may be true...’

RB: [Interjecting] ‘They *are* true.’

JP: ‘... but you took – I wouldn’t argue with you about many of them.’

RB: ‘Well how come I feel so cross with you. It can’t just be because of that beard. It’s gorgeous!’

The trivial diversion to the topic of Paxman’s beard meant that Brand’s question, ‘Well how come I feel so cross with you?’ was left hanging in mid-air. This is the point where Brand could, and should, have gone on the offensive about Paxman’s privileged position as a supposed fearless interrogator of power, the BBC man’s connection with the British-American Project once described as a ‘Trojan horse for US foreign policy’, and then extending to a critique of the BBC itself. There is no shortage of examples of BBC propaganda that could have been raised.

None of that happened.

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A Menagerie of mockers

Brand’s espousal of popular views on Newsnight was sufficiently unsettling, however, that reactionary voices from the media class were quick to mock, denigrate or patronise him. Former *Guardian* journalist Jonathan Cook explained why this is the case: ‘What indicates to me that Julian Assange, Glenn Greenwald and Russell Brand, whatever their personal or political differences, are part of an important social and ethical trend is the huge irritation they cause to the media class who have spent decades making very good livings being paid by the media corporations to limit our intellectual horizons.’

Tom Chivers, the assistant comment editor of the *Daily Telegraph* told his readers that Brand is an ‘unnecessary revolutionary’, and that basically the current system of capitalism works fine apart from a few ‘pockets of regression, little eddies in the forward current’.

David Aaronovitch of the *Times* declared via Twitter: ‘In what way was Russell Brand not an anarchist version of the maddest kind of UKIP supporter?’

And: ‘If you’re angry enough it absolves you from actually thinking anything through. That’s what I got from the Brand interview on #newsnight’

Cook provided other early responses from ‘Britain’s elite journalists in Twitterland’ which ‘illustrated the general rancour they feel towards those who threaten to expose them as the charlatans they are.’

Media commentators continued to spring up to take a pop at Brand. Robin Lustig, who until last year presented *The World Tonight* on BBC Radio 4, asserted that Brand is ‘not only daft but dangerous’. Lustig said dismissively of Brand: ‘The truth is that he has nothing to contribute, other than the self-satisfied smirk of a man who knows he’ll never go hungry or be without a home.’

Joan Smith exhorted Brand in the oligarch-owned *Independent on Sunday*: ‘Go back to your lovely home in the Hollywood Hills and leave politics to people who aren’t afraid of difficult ideas and hard work. You’re one celebrity, I’m afraid, who’s more idiot than savant.’

Just last month, Smith was bemoaning the MPs who had voted against a possible war on Syria or, as she called it, ‘intervention on humanitarian grounds’. She had written: ‘We believe in universal human rights; our laws, treaties and political leaders say so.’

To be this openly credulous, to declare a belief in something because ‘our leaders say so’, is a remarkable admission for an ostensible journalist.

Simon Kelner, editor-in-chief of the *Independent* newspapers, acknowledged that Brand ‘articulates a strain of thinking among a growing number of young people’.

He added: ‘there was just the sense, when Jeremy met Russell, that some of the old certainties may be shifting.’

True enough. But Kelner made sure his readers knew that Brand’s call to overthrow the system of capitalism that is killing the planet is

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When the media commentariat have to resort to smears and insults you can be sure that fear of the public is playing a part
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‘Spartist nonsense.’

In the *Observer*, pro-war commentator Nick Cohen even went as far as an insidious comparison between comedian Russell Brand and fascist dictator Benito Mussolini, and slyly suggested that Brand was calling for a violent revolution. Not true. Somehow Cohen had mangled Brand’s peaceful call to ‘direct our love indiscriminately.’

Cohen then added: ‘artists have always made a show of being drawn towards fanaticism. Extremism is more exciting and dramatic, more artistic perhaps, than the shabby compromises and small changes of democratic societies.’ For Cohen, the ‘shabby compromises’ include neverending support for Britain’s participation in bloody wars and violent ‘interventions’ in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Yemen, Pakistan . . .

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Back to the 1980s

When the media commentariat have to resort to smears and insults you can be sure that fear of the public is playing a part. Readers may feel, then, that we are being a tad harsh on Brand. Didn’t he make many cogent points, and more than hold his own against Paxman, the BBC’s famed rottweiler? Indeed, yes. Brand rightly pointed out that politicians are not taking the necessary action on pressing issues such as climate: ‘They’re not attempting to solve these problems. They’re not. They’re attempting to placate the population. Their measures that are currently being taken around climate change are indifferent, will not solve the problem.’

Adding later: ‘What I’m saying is that within the existing paradigm, the change is not dramatic enough, not radical enough.’

But is this really any different from what environment and social justice campaigners have been saying for decades? Go back to the 1980s, and weren’t we hearing the same thing from Jonathan Porritt and the Greens, Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace and other campaigners? In many media alerts over the years, Media lens has pointed out that the corporate media has long suppressed, marginalised and diverted

any radical challenges to the status quo. Campaigners and activists, of whatever hue and driven by whatever issue, can no longer ignore this crucial issue.

Even in Brand’s 4500-word *New Statesman* piece, he had very little to say about the corporate media. There were two passing mentions of ‘media’, but no mentions of ‘press’, ‘journalism’ or ‘television’. Perhaps we should not be surprised that the well-intentioned Brand, a former ‘MTV journalist’, presenter of Big Brother’s Big Mouth and an actor in big-budget movies, should have a bit of a blind spot when it comes to the corporate media.

George Monbiot declared on Twitter, perhaps only with part of his tongue in cheek, that: ‘The realisation that Russell Brand (@rustyrocks) is in fact the Messiah is disorienting on so many levels.’

Others applauding Brand on social media included Alain de Botton and Jemima Khan. But few prominent supporters of Brand’s ‘revolution’, if any, have said anything that is genuinely critical of elite power; especially of the corporate media, including the BBC.

It is understandable that there was much praise for Russell Brand’s Newsnight interview and *New Statesman* essay. To a large extent, this signifies the desperation of people to hear any challenge to the power-protecting propaganda that we are force-fed every day.

But two crucial factors here are that Brand was selected to appear by media gatekeepers; and that media institutions, notably the BBC, escaped serious scrutiny. If Brand was a serious threat to the broadcaster’s projected image as a beacon of impartiality, he would not have been chosen.

Noam Chomsky has a cautionary note on high-profile exposure in the corporate media: ‘If I started getting public media exposure’, he once said, ‘I’d think I were doing something wrong. Why should any system of power offer opportunities to people who are trying to undermine it? That would be crazy.’

Given all that, how likely is it that the BBC would really provide a launchpad for a revolution?
CT

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whose website –
<http://medialens.org> – this
essay was first
published

Old game, new obsession, new enemy

Despite the warnings, our leaders continue to create a climate for future international terrorism and warfare, writes **John Pilger**

Countries are “pieces on a chessboard upon which is being played out a great game for the domination of the world,” wrote Lord Curzon, Viceroy of India, in 1898. Nothing has changed. The recent shopping mall massacre in Nairobi was a bloody façade behind which a full-scale invasion of Africa and a war in Asia are the great game.

The al-Shabaab shopping mall killers came from Somalia. If any country is an imperial metaphor, it is Somalia. Sharing a common language and religion, Somalis have been divided between the British, French, Italians and Ethiopians. Tens of thousands of people have been handed from one power to another. “When they are made to hate each other,” wrote a British colonial official, “good governance is assured.”

Today, Somalia is a theme park of brutal, artificial divisions, long impoverished by World Bank and IMF “structural adjustment” programmes, and saturated with modern weapons, notably President Obama’s personal favourite, the drone. The one stable Somali government, the Islamic Courts, was “well received by the people in the areas it controlled,” reported the US Congressional Research Service, “[but] received negative press coverage, especially in the West.” Obama crushed it; and in January, Hillary Clinton, then secretary of state, presented her man to the world. “Somalia will remain grateful

to the unwavering support from the United States government,” effused President Hassan Mohamud, “thank you, America.”

The shopping mall atrocity was a response to this – just as the attack on the Twin Towers and the London bombings were explicit reactions to invasion and injustice. Once of little consequence, jihadism now marches in lockstep with the return of unfettered imperialism.

Since Nato reduced modern Libya to a Hobbesian state in 2011, the last obstacles to Africa have fallen. “Scrambles for energy, minerals and fertile land are likely to occur with increasing intensity,” report Ministry of Defence planners. They predict “high numbers of civilian casualties”; therefore “perceptions of moral legitimacy will be important for success”. Sensitive to the PR problem of invading a continent, the arms mammoth, BAE Systems, together with Barclay Capital and BP, warn that “the government should define its international mission as managing risks on behalf of British citizens”. The cynicism is lethal. British governments are repeatedly warned, not least by the parliamentary intelligence and security committee, that foreign adventures beckon retaliation at home.

With minimal media interest, the US African Command (Africom) has deployed troops to 35 African countries, establishing a familiar network of authoritarian suppli-

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Somalia is a theme park of brutal, artificial divisions, long impoverished by World Bank and IMF “structural adjustment” programmes, and saturated with modern weapons, notably President Obama’s personal favourite, the drone

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Where the Americans bring drones to Africa, the Chinese build roads, bridges and dams
Where the Americans bring drones, the Chinese build roads, bridges and dams
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cants eager for bribes and armaments. In war games, a “soldier to soldier” doctrine embeds US officers at every level of command from general to warrant officer. The British did the same in India. It is as if Africa’s proud history of liberation, from Patrice Lumumba to Nelson Mandela, is consigned to oblivion by a new master’s black colonial elite whose “historic mission”, warned Frantz Fanon half a century ago, is the subjugation of their own people in the cause of “a capitalism rampant though camouflaged”. The reference also fits the Son of Africa in the White House.

For Obama, there is a more pressing cause – China. Africa is China’s success story. Where the Americans bring drones, the Chinese build roads, bridges and dams. What the Chinese want is resources, especially fossil fuels. Nato’s bombing of Libya drove out 30,000 Chinese oil industry workers. More than jihadism or Iran, China is now Washington’s obsession in Africa and beyond. This is a “policy” known as the “pivot to Asia”, whose threat of world war may be as great as any in the modern era.

The meeting in Tokyo of US secretary of state John Kerry and defence secretary Chuck Hagel with their Japanese counterparts accelerated the prospect of war with the new imperial rival. Sixty per cent of US and naval forces are to be based in Asia by 2020, aimed at China. Japan is re-arming rapidly under the right-wing government of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who came to power in December with a pledge to build a “new, strong military” and circumvent the “peace constitution”.

A US-Japanese anti-ballistic missile system near Kyoto is directed at China. Using long-range Global Hawk drones, the US has sharply increased its provocations in the East China and South China seas, where Japan and China dispute the ownership of the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands. Advanced vertical take-off aircraft are now deployed in Japan; their purpose is blitzkrieg.

On the Pacific island of Guam, from which B-52s attacked Vietnam, the biggest military

buildup since the Indochina wars includes 9,000 US Marines. In Australia, a recent arms fair and military jamboree that diverted much of Sydney, is in keeping with a government propaganda campaign to justify an unprecedented US military build-up from Perth to Darwin, aimed at China. The vast US base at Pine Gap near Alice Springs is, as Edward Snowden disclosed, a hub of US spying in the region and beyond; it also critical to Obama’s worldwide assassinations by drone.

“We have to inform the British to keep them on side,” an assistant US secretary of state McGeorge Bundy once said, “You in Australia are with us, come what may.” Australian forces have long played a mercenary role for Washington. However, there is a hitch. China is Australia’s biggest trading partner and largely responsible for its evasion of the 2008 recession. Without China, there would be no minerals boom: no weekly mining return of up to a billion dollars.

The dangers this presents are rarely debated publicly in Australia, where prime minister Tony Abbott’s patron, Rupert Murdoch, controls 70 per cent of the press. Occasionally, anxiety is expressed over the “choice” that the US wants Australia to make. A report by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute warns that any US plan to strike at China would involve “blinding” Chinese surveillance, intelligence and command systems. This would “consequently increase the chances of Chinese nuclear pre-emption ... and a series of miscalculations on both sides if Beijing perceives conventional attacks on its homeland as an attempt to disarm its nuclear capability”.

In his address to the nation last month, Obama said, “What makes America different, what makes us exceptional is that we are dedicated to act.” **CT**

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John Pilger’s new film, Utopia, is released in cinemas in the UK on 15 November and is launched in Australia in January. This article was first published in Britain’s Guardian newspaper

Worse than Watergate

A new Supreme Court campaign finance case could unleash unprecedented political corruption, writes **Sam Pizzigati**

The US Supreme Court is mulling a case that could end up giving America's wealthy a perpetual green light to contribute as much as they want directly to politicians and political parties.

Credit Shaun McCutcheon, an Alabama businessman who owns an electrical engineering company, for getting this ball rolling. In the 2012 election cycle, McCutcheon contributed heavily to conservative candidates and Republican Party committees. But the experience left the mega millionaire feeling terribly aggrieved.

Federal campaign finance reform legislation enacted four decades ago in the wake of the Watergate scandal limits how much individuals can give directly to candidates and political parties. In 2012, McCutcheon ran up against those limits, then sitting at about \$46,000 for candidates and \$70,000 for party committees.

McCutcheon had wanted to give candidates and party panels much more. Under the law, he couldn't then – and he can't now either. The current, inflation-adjusted aggregate limit for the 2014 congressional elections: \$123,000.

But wealthy individuals like McCutcheon, thanks to previous court decisions, can spend on their own, independently of candidate and party campaigns, as much as they want to influence a federal election's impact.

In other words, a billionaire can't currently give a particular congressional candidate a \$1 million check. But the same billionaire can legally hand a TV station \$1 million to run 30-second ads that extol that candidate's virtues – or attack that candidate's opponent.

This sort of "independent expenditure" can make a major impact as campaigns play out. Independent expenditures can also complicate campaigns, especially when deep-pockets go "off-message" in the advertising they finance. In most situations, candidates and political parties would much rather have billionaires contribute directly to them and not go off and spend independently.

If the Supreme Court uses the McCutcheon case to erase our last remaining Watergate-era campaign funding limits, these political insiders will get their way. For the first time in years, they would be able to solicit unlimited contributions from America's wealthy.

That turn of events, public interest groups point out, would leave political candidates and party officials even more eager to grant wealthy donors improper influence.

Fred Wertheimer, America's elder statesman of campaign finance reform, is imparting a particularly dire warning. Repealing limits on direct contributions to candidates and parties, he contends, would take us

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In the 2012 election cycle, McCutcheon contributed heavily to conservative candidates and Republican Party committees. But the experience left the mega millionaire feeling terribly aggrieved

BUYING PRESIDENTS

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The gap between rich then and rich now becomes even greater when you take taxes into effect
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right back to the same political corruption that led to the Watergate scandals.

But Wertheimer may actually be understating the danger. Repealing limits on direct contributions to candidates and parties would likely create a political environment far more toxic than anything we experienced before Watergate.

Back before Watergate, in the mid 20th century, America's rich didn't have nearly as much wealth.

Some numbers: In 1972, the year of the Watergate burglary, the nation's top 0.1 percent averaged, in today's dollars, the equivalent of \$1.48 million in income. In 2012, America's top 0.1 percent averaged \$6.4 million. That's more than a four-fold increase.

But the gap between rich then and rich now becomes even greater when you take taxes into effect. In 1972, taxpayers averaging \$1.48 million in today's dollars paid 40.7 percent of their total incomes in federal in-

come tax. In 2012, note Tax Policy Center estimates, taxpayers in the top 0.1 percent paid federal income taxes at about half that rate.

The bottom line: America's really rich in 2012 had over six times more after-tax dollars in their pockets, after inflation, than their counterparts in 1972.

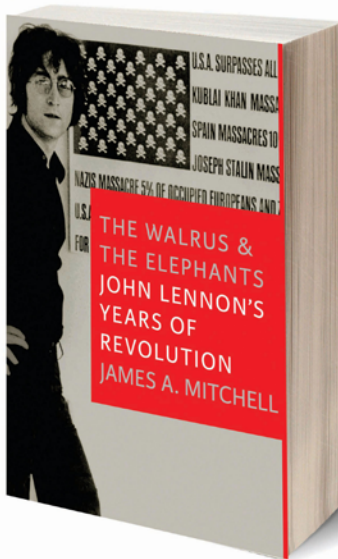
We shouldn't fear a wave of Watergate corruption. If the Supreme Court ends all limits on the campaign cash the super rich can throw at their candidates, American politics faces dangers far more troubling than anything Richard Nixon ever imposed upon us. **CT**

.....
Sam Pizzigati, an Institute for Policy Studies associate fellow, edits the inequality weekly *Too Much*. His latest book is *The Rich Don't Always Win: The Forgotten Triumph over Plutocracy that Created the American Middle Class*. OtherWords.org

THE WALRUS & THE ELEPHANTS

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Street life

Trevor Grundy is impressed and inspired by **Michael Parenti's** memoir of his early years in New York's Italian East Harlem

At the start of *Waiting for Yesterday – Pages from a Street Kid's Life*, Michael Parenti says that some of the names in the text have been changed to protect the author.

Joke aside, the only people who could possibly take exception to this well-written and subtly constructed memoir about the author's childhood and early manhood in Italian East Harlem in the late 1930s and 1940s are his old establishment enemies – money-grubbing journalists, stick-in-the-mud politicians, and the wallywankers who run the financial world, not only in America but anywhere else you care to name (including all that once made up Stalin's USSR and Mao's China) – gangsters and banksters Parenti calls them.

Michael Parenti is one of America's great writers and social commentators. He dedicates this short jewel of a book to his wrong-side-of-the-track "special friends" who left the world way back but not entirely. Here they live again in a book of twelve well-crafted parts which tell us what it was like growing up, on the eve of the Second World War, in a place –

Italian East Harlem – that thousands of Italians called 'home' but which a reporter from *Life* magazine called a slum

Say hello to the days when most Italian immigrant hearts beat not for America, the first rainbow nation but rather for the villages and folk they'd left behind.

Parenti writes, "In their hearts many of the first-generation men and women nursed a sentimental attachment to

Italy. As the years wore on, the old country for them became Paradise Lost while the new land often seemed heartless, money-driven and filled with the kind of lures and corruption that distanced children from their parents. They felt little patriotic devotion to America. What kept the great majority of them in the United States were the loaves and fishes, not the stars and stripes. And keep in mind that of the millions who migrated to America, thousands returned to Italy, finding life on the other side more manageable."

These are vignettes of day-to-

.....
Say hello to the days when most Italian immigrant hearts beat not for America, the first rainbow nation but rather for the villages and folk they'd left behind



WAITING FOR YESTERDAY
Pages from a Street Kid's Life
 Michael Parenti
 (Bordighera Press)
 \$11.97

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**Some 10,000
Italians were
forced to vacate
their homes in the
restricted area
along the west
coast., while those
who lived near the
coast were not
allowed to own
short-wave radios
or flashlights**
.....

day life in a place called Italian Harlem in the late 1930s and early 1940s, sparkling crystals of experience that make us more aware of the way things once were.

Meet also Parenti's family, his siblings, his mother and father and, in a brief and deeply touching section called *Discovering Italy in America*, one of his grandfathers.

"Living in America," the author writes, "Grandpa Giuseppe, a keenly intelligent man who spoke only a Barese dialect much of his early life, listened to Italian language programs offered in New York including operas. Over the years he expanded his comprehension of the standard Italian language. He taught himself to read Italian by plowing through the leading Italian language daily newspaper in the United States, *il Progressio*. By the 1940s, after enough years in the new country, he became less a Barese and something of an Italian, rooting for Italy, a nation he began to identify as his very own. So the immigrants who came here did undergo an acculturation process of sorts. While the dominant society thought of turning them into Americans, some provincials like Grandpa Parenti managed to turn themselves into Italians."

When war came, Italy sided with Germany and so became the enemy of Britain and America, although the US was not yet in the fight. In 1939, 1,600 Italian aliens were arrested: 250 were interned in military camps for up to two years and 600,000 others forced to submit to curfew. Parenti tells us that baseball star Joe Di Maggio's parents were classified as "enemy aliens." Some 10,000 Italians were forced to vacate their homes in the restricted area along the west coast., while those who lived near the coast were not allowed to own short-wave radios or flashlights. The image was a terrifying one, he writes – little Luigi, up in his attic, using his flashlight to flick coded messages to a Japanese submarine, telling it where and how to attack the Golden Gate Bridge.

Michael Parenti is no admirer of domi-

nant societies. There was one back home led by Benito Mussolini, son of a socialist blacksmith and former communist-turned-fascist. He captured the hearts of many American Italians and delighted the wealthy in Europe with his promises to smash not only communism but also the trade union movement.

Cole Porter waxed lyrical: "You're the tops, you're the Mussolini." America hummed along. Though Parenti doesn't mention this, Winston Churchill was a great admirer of Il Duce saying that were he a young man in Italy he'd have joined him.

The communist sympathizer and poet W.H. Auden – safely in America in 1939 – wrote a poem that told of the dilemma he and others like him faced once Hitler stopped growling and started moving the tanks. Well away from it, he wrote . . .

*I sit in one of the dives
Of Fifty Second Street
Uncertain and afraid
As the clever hopes expire
Of a low dishonest decade.*

Low and dishonest for upper class public (in England that means private) school educated young men who'd flirted with the working class for intellectual (often sexual) reasons throughout the 1930s. Not the case for Parenti and his contemporaries in East Harlem who'd known poverty and felt the need for socialism. They'd smelt the coffee. Even though they didn't get to drink it.

Yet Auden was honest enough to admit that for people like himself who were tourists of the revolution only a cigarette paper divided their communism from their Fascism.

Looking back on what he wrote in the 1930s about the glories of Stalin's egalitarianism, Auden wrote: "My name on the title page seems a pseudonym for someone else, someone talented but near the border of sanity, which might well, in a year or two, become a Nazi." (quoted in *The Auden Generation* –

Literature and Politics in England in the 1930s, by Samuel Hynes, The Bodley Head, 1976).

After growing up in East Harlem, with Puerto Ricans on one side of the fence and Afro-Americans (then called Negroes) on the other, he lived poor but proud. Desperate for books, for education and a new way of life, he uprooted himself from his parents' home when they opened a grocery shop and went to live with an aunt and cousin in a middle class part of the Bronx where he stumbled towards a path that led to Yale University. The rest we know.

Colliding worlds

In a section titled *Moving Along*, worlds collide:

“It was at Brown University in 1955-1957 while studying for my master’s degree, that I first experienced the affluent Nordic Protestant Ivy League world that was so markedly different from blue-collar Italian background. Brown was an education in itself: the creamy upper class faces and crisp self-assured diction, the tastefully understated garb and other implicit distinctions that reflected the moneyed world from which these students came. Consider just their recreational skills: tennis, racquetball, skiing, bridge. What goes here? I asked myself. No handball, boxing, stickball or pinochle?”

Well, for starters, no Roman Catholic priests telling you what to do and how to think. With the dry wit that underscores so much of what Parenti says and writes, he tells us how the first Protestant preacher he came across gave him a Bible. The pictures were great. But the Catholic ‘father’ told young Michael to chuck it onto the garbage heap. It was a Protestant Bible. Says Parenti, “Religion does teach people a healthy intolerance – how to hate other religions.”

The picture Michael Parenti paints of East Harlem in the late 1930s is clear and moving. I gulped when I read how some (probably) white WASP wrote in *Life* magazine that the

place was a slum. It might have been a congested neighborhood full of poor Italians but it was also a place where people loved, cooked, ate, laughed, sang, danced and grew up. Slum is an ugly word. Only ugly people use it.

Parenti grew and learned socialism at street pavement level. The slums aren’t the problem, he says. The slums are the solution. But a solution for whom? Well, for all those who want to dump “low performing” groups and pile them in there. They’re a pain and a burden to “society” so dump them in and close the door. But they get out, don’t they. To bake the bread, to sweep the streets, to drive the lorries. To keep civilization rolling over.

And don’t – not even for a moment – talk about class or class warfare. “In America,” Parenti said on a recent Vancouver radio programme, “we’re taught to be absolutely blind to class, even when it’s hitting you right in the face we call it something else. We don’t even use the word class. We talk about blue collar, the elderly poor, we have all sorts of descriptive words which are useful but we don’t talk about the working class or the financial class.”

Michael Parenti is famous in America but less well known in Britain. But if you’re a British reader of *ColdType*, search Google for “Christopher Hitchens and Michael Parenti – debates” and you’ll get a taste of the man and his ideas. Like the poet Greek poet Cavafy, he stands at an odd angle to the rest of the universe so don’t try and put him in a box or coffin marked, Che, Mao, Stalin or New Labour.

I loved every line and my recommendation is this: Whatever you plan to do next, don’t. Read this book first. **CT**

Trevor Grundy is a British journalist and author who lived and worked in central, eastern and southern Africa from 1966-1996. He lives in southern England and works as an author, researcher and journalist

Parenti grew and learned socialism at street pavement level. The slums aren’t the problem, he says. The slums are the solution. But a solution for whom?

Roma, racism, denial and a ‘dangerous wind’

We all think of Sweden as a leader in human rights. But a recent scandal involving the persecution of Roma suggests otherwise, writes **Ritt Goldstein**

.....
Police in Southern Sweden were found to have compiled and kept a registry of Roma, a registry even containing the names of over 1000 young children
.....

Throughout history, there have been many mistaking a willingness to commit wrongdoing as courage, not to mention respecting the rights of others as weakness. Recent years have seen an increasing elimination of rights pursued by those citing ‘demands of state or security’, and sometimes we have only discovered the effective elimination of such rights after they are gone. But as terrible a rip in the very fabric of society which this is, perhaps worse still is the phenomenon of ‘denial’, a phenomenon which insulates wrongdoers from perceiving the nightmares they may pursue, simultaneously blinding others to the societal malaise raging among them.

Decades ago, in 1939, American philosopher John Dewey saw the most serious threat to democracy as “the existence within our own personal attitudes and within our own institutions of conditions similar to those which have given a victory to external authority, discipline, uniformity”, emphasizing that the fight for our freedoms “is accordingly here – within ourselves and our institutions”.

In November 2012, the Swedish government published a report titled ‘Främlingsfienden inom oss’ – I believe one might translate that as ‘The xenophobe within us’. And, my translation of the last sentence in the report’s summary reads: ‘We must begin with ourselves.’

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Fear and ‘comparisons to the Nazi era’
.....

At the end of August, Swedish representatives were questioned by the ‘UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination’ as to what actions had been taken to diminish intolerance. Prior to the UN committee meeting, Social Democratic MP Aleksander Gabelic (head of Sweden’s UN Association) was reported as charging that the last decade had seen little progress, a late-August report the UN Association was party to finding that Sweden’s “indigenous, ethnic and religious minorities continue to suffer discrimination in all areas of life.” And on Sept 23 this nation was rocked by a scandal whose nature brought comparisons to the Nazi era.

Police in Southern Sweden were found to have compiled and kept a registry of Roma, a registry even containing the names of over 1,000 young children (as young as two), a registry which reportedly runs contrary to the European Convention on Human Rights (among other laws), and a registry for which Sweden’s Justice Minister has apologized to the Roma community. Meanwhile, The Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Nils Muižnieks, commented on his Facebook page: “With this file on Roma people, the Swedish State contributes to alienating from society both its Romani

communities and other minority groups. The past has taught us that this is a very dangerous path which risks fuelling racist movements. The police should preserve a democratic State, not endanger it.”

The Swedish ‘paper of record’, *Dagens Nyheter* (DN – The Day’s News), broke the story, and in a Sept 28 article addressing events, ‘The man who broke the Roma registry scandal’, *The Local’s* (Sweden’s major English-language news site) first paragraph began with the translated DN quote, “Many are scared and worried. Many think of Hitler, which I have noted that a great deal of opinion-makers consider to be tasteless. But the Roma were a part of the Nazi genocide, just like the Jews, although this is less well-known”.

.....
Attitudes vs actions

The major directory in question contains more than 4,000 names, broken down by relationships and family-trees, and includes over 1,000 young children. Questions of ‘ethnic-profiling’ and discrimination exploded with the ‘Roma Registry’s’ revelation, the registering of very young children sparking particular concern.

Highlighting the gravity of what’s occurring, DN published an English-language article titled ‘Over one thousand children illegally registered’. A quote from it reads: ”This is what Hitler did. First they register us. Then they get rid of us”

Sweden is a country which consistently scores well when its residents are surveyed as to their attitudes regarding pluralism and tolerance, yet, it has been argued that there exists a ‘disconnect’ between Swedish attitudes and actions. The ‘Roma Registry Scandal’ might be seen as highlighting what this can mean, and an August article in *The Local*, “Structural racism ‘still a problem’ in Sweden”, provides further facts upon the reality those not of Sweden’s ‘majority community’ face. Providing harsher comment, a 2011 OpEd News article, “Sweden and its

dark side, Stieg Larsson, and Hollywood’s ‘The girl with the dragon tattoo’”, observes of the Roma that earlier, in some areas of the country, “Roma were sterilized simply for being Roma”.

I know members of the Roma community here, but have been unable to contact them since the scandal broke. They have blond hair, blue eyes, and shared the fact of their Roma heritage only after quite some time. My impression is that their heritage was something that they felt needed to be hidden from most, to my eyes highlighting the effects of discrimination. Notably, earlier requests to discuss Roma issues had been politely rebuffed, my interpretation of this being that the subject was ‘too difficult’ for them to address.

Of course, not all Swedish Roma are blond and blue-eyed, and on Sept 27 a Stockholm Roma registry, a registry discontinued in 1996, surfaced. *The Local’s* summary of the article they did, ‘Stockholm city kept Roma registry until 1996’, reads: ‘Stockholm city council had its own Roma registry as recently as 1996 which profiled people based on their intelligence and cleanliness, with records kept in a so-called “gypsy inventory” (zigenarinventeringen), the *Dagens Nyheter* newspaper revealed on Friday.’ *The Local* cited one of the ‘registry’ entries describing a woman, an entry which observed, “She’s as black as the night.” The article also quotes Swedish Integration Minister Erik Ullenhag as noting he was “ashamed” by the revelations.

.....
Reality, denial, and a dangerous wind

On Sept 13, two of the big national papers, *Expressen* and *Aftonbladet*, ran an op-ed article, ‘Sverige räcker till för oss alla’ (Sweden is enough for all of us). It was an initiative against what was termed ‘a dangerous xenophobic wind blowing across Sweden’, a promise by a substantive number of ‘celebrity Swedes’ that they would speak out against xenophobia, that they would no longer re-

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Sweden is a country which consistently scores well when its residents are surveyed as to their attitudes regarding pluralism and tolerance, yet, it has been argued that there exists a ‘disconnect’ between Swedish attitudes and actions

SWEDEN EXPOSED

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I was surprised and gratified when the Roma registry story actually broke – it was reported that police had initially denied the Registry’s existence
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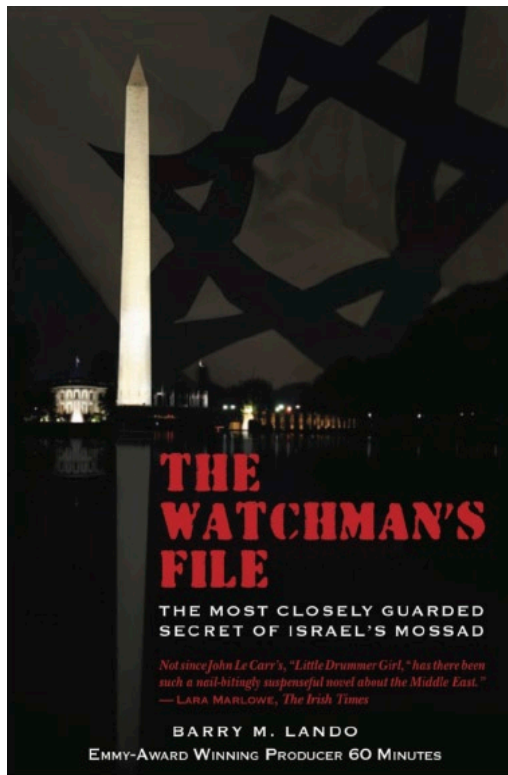
main silent. The last time I checked, over 18,000 had pledged to support the initiative (there are about 9.6 million Swedes). Not all the news from here is bad. And, I was surprised and gratified when the Roma registry story actually broke – it was reported that police had initially denied the Registry’s existence. But, perhaps the problem here isn’t based upon the kind of ‘denial’ that police reportedly initially exercised, but upon the kind that allows many to dismiss anything sufficiently unpleasant before them.

In 2012, *ColdType* and *CounterPunch* published ‘Living as a “Sub-Human” in Sweden’, which observed that some were pursuing arguably ‘inappropriate’ beliefs, that “the most disturbing aspect of these incidents – each occurring quite separately from the others – was the complete lack of malice among those embracing such absurdities. These ‘otherwise good people’ completely failed to recognize the wholly

inappropriate nature of what they were saying.” Last March, in an interview with Paul Lappalainen, a senior Swedish civil servant who had run the Government’s 2005 inquiry into ‘structural discrimination’, it was emphasized to me that the “problem here is the big disconnect between actions and attitudes”. Elaborating further, Lappalainen explained that “denial, for me, is the key issue”, observing that too many Swedes “haven’t really dealt with racism that’s part of their structure”.

For the last years, I have ‘lived as a subhuman in Sweden’, leaving my life and health severely shattered – what’s described above is all too accurate. But, even if I should soon die, the truth will remain. **CT**

.....
Ritt Goldstein is an American investigative political journalist based in Stockholm, Sweden



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Boys will be . . . ?

Fred Reed has some thoughts on the pacification of America

It is time to get women out of the schooling of boys. It is way past time. Women in our feminized classrooms are consigning generations of our sons to years of misery and diminished futures. The evidence is everywhere. Few dare notice it.

The feminisation is real. More than seventy-five percent of teachers are women; in New York state, over ninety percent of elementary school teachers are women; in the US, over seventy percent of psychologists are women. This is feminisation with fangs.

I have just read *Back to Normal: Why Ordinary Childhood Behavior Is Mistaken for ADHD, Bipolar Disorder, and Autism Spectrum Disorder*, by a psychologist, Enrico Gnaulati, who works with children alleged to have psychological problems in school, usually meaning boys. I decline to recommend it because of its psychobabble, its tendency to discover the obvious at great length, and its gender-correct pronouns, which will grate on the literate. (I mean constructions resembling “If a student comes in, tell him or her that he or she should put his or her books in his or her locker”) However, a serious interest in the subject justifies slogging through the prose. (The statistics above are from the book.)

The relevant content is that women are making school hell for boys, that they have turned normal boyish behavior, such as en-

joyment of rough-housing, into psychiatric “personality disorders.” They are doping boys up, forcing them into behavior utterly alien to them, and sending them to psychiatrists if they don’t conform to standards of behavior suited to girls. The result is that boy children hate school and do poorly (despite, as Gnaulati, says, having higher IQs). This is no secret for anyone paying attention, but Gnaulati makes it explicit.

Valentine’s day?

As a galling example he cites one Robert, an adolescent responding badly to classes and therefore suspected by his teacher of having a “personality disorder.” From the book: “She required all forty students in the class to design Valentine’s Day cards for each other. She was emphatic about wanting them personalized. Names had to be spelled correctly and compliments written up genuinely.”

Valentines? This was eight-grade English. Students, who by then once knew grammar cold, should be reading literature or learning to write coherently. In my eighth-grade class, we read Julius Caesar: “I want the men around me to be fat, healthy-looking men who sleep at night.” Valentines? Compliments?

This, the author assures the reader, did

.....
Women are making school hell for boys, that they have turned normal boyish behavior, such as enjoyment of rough-housing, into psychiatric “personality disorders”

.....
**I do not presume
to tell women
what they should
teach girls –
astrophysics,
valentine design
with sincere
compliments,
whatever they like.
Just stay away
from the boys**
.....

not take place in an asylum for the mildly retarded, but in one of the ten best high-schools in California. What must the rest be like?

Of course Robert was having trouble putting up with the girly drivel, this feminized ooze, devoid of academic content. “Ooooooh! Let’s have a warm, emotional bonding experience.”

This is why women should not be allowed within fifty feet of a school where boys are taught. A boy, especially a bright one, will want to drop out of school through the nearest window, run screaming to a recruiting office for the French Foreign Legion, anything to get away from inane, vapid, and insubstantial feel-good compulsory niceness inflicted by some low-wattage ed-school grad.

Get these ditz-rabbits away from our sons. Let us have separate schools for the sexes, with each being taught by teachers of the same sex. I do not presume to tell women what they should teach girls – astrophysics, valentine design with sincere compliments, whatever they like. Just stay away from the boys.

The thrust of current social propaganda is that the sexes are identical in all important respects. They are not. The differences are great. It is time we stopped pretending otherwise.

.....
Five differences

First: By their nature, females are far more interested in social relationships than in academic substance. If you are a man, ask yourself how often you have serious intellectual discussions of politics, science, history, or society with women as compared to men. Seldom. Degrees and exceptions, yes. Still, seldom.

Second: Women are totalitarian. Men are happy to let boys be boys and girls be girls. Women want all children to be girls. In school this means emphasizing diligence – neat homework done on time, no matter

how silly or academically vacuous – over performance, meaning material learned. Women favor docility, orderliness, cooperation in groups, not making waves, niceness and comity. For boys this is asphyxiating.

If women wanted to start a bar for women only, men would not care. If men want a private club in which to enjoy male company, women explode in fury. Totalitarian.

In common with the keepers of the Russian gulag, women are more than willing to drug little boys into submission. There is a Stalinist mercilessness in this, a complete lack of understanding of, or interest in, what boys are. (“Ve haff vays of making you...”)

Third: Women prefer security to freedom, males freedom to security. In politics, this has ominous implications for civil liberties. In the schools this means that wrestling and dodge ball are violence, that tag might lead to a fall and scraped knees, that a little boy who draws a soldier with a rifle is a dangerous psychopath in the making. This is hysteria.

(Stray thought: If I wanted to create a murderous psycho, I would Ritalinate him into a little speed freak, repress his every instinct, and humiliate him by having the police drag him away. It would work like a charm. In his trial, his defense would be justifiable sociopathy.)

Fourth: “Therapy.” This disguised witchcraft is very much a subset of the female fascination with emotional relations. It allows them to talk endlessly about their feelings. Men would rather be crucified. Thus everything becomes a “disorder.” Among these absurdities are things like Intermittent Explosive Disorder (appropriately, IED), and Temper Irregularity Disorder. These disorders have only been discovered since women took over the schools.

The list could go on. Boys, like men, are competitive, physically and intellectually, delighted to play hours of intensely competitive pick-up basketball. Women in the schools prefer a cooperative group game led by a caring adult. What a horror.

Even the ways in which men get along with each other differ sharply from the female approach. (Thus the desire for venues for men only.) For example, when I once broke a leg in a sky-diving accident, the women in the news room were sympathetic and concerned. At a Special Forces party I attended, there was laughter and sarcasm. “Goddam dumbass Marine can’t even do a PLF right. (parachute landing fall). Hey, let’s break his other leg.” Translated from the male, this meant (a) that they accepted me as one of them, and (b) that to them a broken leg was not a tragedy but an inconvenience. Which it is.

Fifth: In the United States, women simply dislike men. Saying this causes eruptions of denials. If you believe these, I’d like you to meet my friend Daisy Lou the Tooth Fairy. Check the ranting of feminists, the endless portrayal on television of men as fools and swine, the punitive political correctness and the silly anti-rape fantasies on campus.

In the schools this hostility takes the form of the passive aggression behind the predatory niceness. “We’re boring him to

death, keeping him miserable, and sending him for psychiatric reprogramming because we care so much about him.” Uh, yeah.

Outside of the US, fewer women buy this. My stepdaughter Natalia, Mexican, is working on a degree in clinical psychology, and sees students – read “boys” – sent to her by teachers to determine whether they have ADHD. “They don’t have ADHS,” she says. “They’re bored.”

Finally: Women display a pedestrian practicality alien to males. If a woman needs to use a computer, she will learn to do it, and do it well. She won’t learn assembly-language programming for the pure joy of it. She can drive a car perfectly well, but has no notion of what a cam lobe is or the difference between disk and drum brakes. This is why men invent things, and women seldom do.

CT

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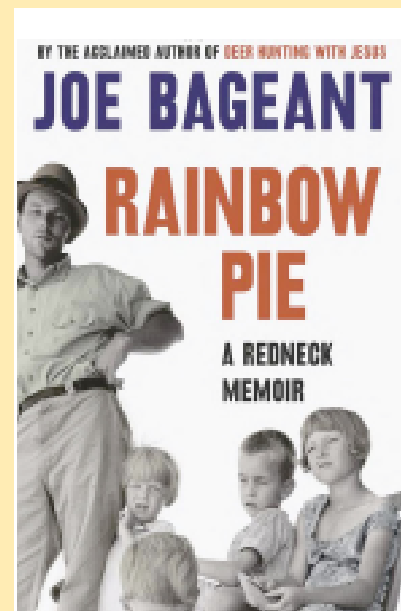
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