Bushwick students buck military

By John Tarleton

Luis Reyes is a senior at Bushwick Outreach Center in Brooklyn who wants to study journalism in college. He recently discovered that military recruiters had the inside scoop on him.

“They know my interests and everything,” says Reyes, 19. “I’m already getting all kinds of letters and phone calls and whatnot.”

The military’s individually targeted appeal to Reyes hasn’t worked to date. He still hopes to start college next fall at Hofstra University. However, the high-pressure recruiting experienced by Reyes and many of his friends suggests what lies ahead for students as the military aggressively makes use of a little-known provision in the 670-page No Child Left Behind Act of 2002.

The provision in the much-touted education bill requires high schools to provide military recruiters access to facilities as well as contact information for every student—or lose their federal aid.

“The military would choose to be in every school in every classroom in every community if they could, because overkill is their way of doing things,” says Rick Jahnkow, Director of Project YANO (Youth And Non-military Opportunities), a San Diego-based group founded in 1984.

The military currently enlists 350,000 people a year. Its recruitment efforts have become increasingly sophisticated, and relentless, since it switched from the draft to an all-volunteer force in 1973 at the end of the Vietnam War.

It spends hundreds of millions of dollars to advertise on television, radio, web sites, outdoor ads, and in youth publications. It also operates Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) programs in 3,500 schools, holds summer camp programs on military bases for disadvantaged youth, and provides guidance counseling, after-school tutoring and dropout recovery programs in some troubled inner city schools. Mobile recruiting stations also appear in shopping malls, at sporting events and inside theaters at showings of popular pro-military movies.

In Bushwick, getting the message out also means calling prospective recruits at early as 6 a.m. and showing up at their workplaces and outside of their churches, according to Reyes and Jesus Gonzalez, 17, a junior at Bushwick Outreach.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

SELLING KETCHUP, SELLING WAR

By Laura Miller

“In February 2001, when Heinz North America decided it was ready to announce a new color of Heinz EZ Squirt, the question was, could it repeat the success of Blastin’ Green Heinz EZ Squirt?” So asks the Heinz EZ Squirt Funky Purple Launch overview. Food producer Heinz and public relations firm Jack Horner Communications set out to launch a product that consumers didn’t know they wanted: purple ketchup.

Their stated goal was to “stir up meaningful media buzz for the new color for at least a month.” The campaign succeeded. Heinz scored the editorial equivalent of $6.4 million in advertising, nearly 330 million media impressions, and won the 2002 Silver Anvil for excellence in consumer products public relations.

So, how did a product launch campaign with a budget of just over $100,000 do that? And how does it relate to the United States’ impending war with Iraq?

The success of the campaigns for both the Funky Purple EZ Squirt and President George W. Bush’s military action rely on shaping public opinion through the delivery of a persuasive message to a target audience via the media. In short, they both use public relations.

In September, when the Bush administration declared it was ready to announce a new war with Iraq, the question was: Could it repeat the 1990 campaign to launch Operation Desert Storm?

That campaign, fronted in part by Citizens for a Free Kuwait, was a success. PR firm Hill & Knowlton spent $10.8 million of the Kuwaiti monarchy’s money to promote the U.S. “liberation of Kuwait.”

In the most memorable moment, a 15-year-old Kuwaiti girl tearfully told Congress, and later the United Nations Security Council, of Iraqi soldiers dumping Kuwaiti babies out of incubators.

After the bombs started falling, journalists discovered that the girl was the daughter of Kuwait’s ambassador to the United States and had been coached by the Hill & Knowlton team. The story had been fabricated.

This time, according to the Sept. 7 New York Times, the White House is following a “meticulously planned strategy to persuade the public, the Congress, and the allies of the need to confront the threat from Saddam Hussein.”

White House Chief of Staff Andrew H. Card, Jr. explained to the Times why the administration waited until September to begin their push. “From a marketing point of view, you don’t introduce new products in August.”

On Sept. 17, the London Times reported that a $200 million “PR blitz against Saddam Hussein” was being launched “at American and foreign audiences, particularly in Arab nations skeptical of U.S. policy in the region.” The campaign would be overseen by the new U.S. Office of Global Communications and use “advertising techniques.”

What color?

To start the hype for the purple ketchup campaign, Jack Horner Communications sent out a press release with a “mystery” photo—a plain black EZ Squirt bottle with a question mark on it. Journalists were supposed to wonder, “What color would the new ketchup be?” Seven weeks later, Horner sent 200 media outlets a press kit and a full-size bottle of Funky Purple. TV outlets in the top 25 U.S. markets had already been pitched the story. Coverage of the new purple ketchup tallied 1,040 TV stories. In the following three-and-
Independent Media Index

The world of media is alive with hundreds of valuable and exciting resources for information, tools, entertainment and cultural connections. The following is a list of unique and alternative media sources compiled by staff members of the New York IMC.

MAKE

W.E.R.I.S.E (women empowered through revolutionary ideas supporting enterprise) is a women’s arts collective. www.werise.org

Paper Tiger Television is an open, non-profit, volunteer video collective. www.papertiger.org

Third World Majority is a media training and production resource center dedicated to global justice. www.cultureawespeon.org

La Lutta community resource focused on education, visual and performing arts and multimedia outreach. www.lalutta.org

People-Link is an online organization of progressive activists offering a full range of web services. www.people-link.org

Film/Video Arts is a non-profit equipment rental and training facility. 462 Broadway, suite #520. www.hva.com

READ, WATCH, LISTEN

Democracy Now! is a national, listener-sponsored public radio and TV show. Listen on WBAI, 99.5 FM or watch on Manhattan Neighborhood Network, cable channels 34 and 107 at 9 a.m., Monday to Friday. www.democracynow.org

Davey D’s Hip Hop Corner, from the host of KPFK’s Hard Knocks Radio. www.daveyd.com

The Brecht Forum offers a year-round program of classes, public lectures and seminars, performances, popular education workshops, and language classes at 285 W. 27th Street, 10th Floor. www.brechtforum.org

Redeye Magazine is a nonprofit, youth-run political hip hop magazine. www.angelfire.com/hiphop/redemagazine/index.htm

Stay Free Magazine is a print magazine focused on issues surrounding commercialism and American culture. www.stayfreemagazine.org

Turntablism Mix Master Mike in a shot from Scratch, a documentary featured on Konscious.com.

Konscious is a website showing socially aware film/video, music and arts programming. www.konscious.com

Free Speech TV airs on DISH Network channel 9415 and some community access cable stations. www.freespeech.org

Anthology Film Archives provides some of the best independent film screenings in New York. They also have an extensive research library of independent film history, 32 2nd Avenue (at 2nd Street) [212] 305-5181. www.anthologyfilmarchives.org

Alternative Radio is a public affairs program and website providing information, analyses and views that are frequently ignored or distorted in other media. www.alternativeradio.org

BUY

Imagination Digital Soul Cinema is Harlem’s first independent cinema, showcasing independent features and short films from the African/Latino Diaspora on Friday nights. 135 W 116th Street (7th & Lex). www.imaginationfestival.org

WHERE DO I GET MY COPY OF THE INDYPENDENT???

LOWER EAST SIDE
Bluestocking Bookstore
172 Allen Street, between Houston & Stanton

WEST VILLAGE
LGB Center
213 W. 13th St

UNION SQUARE
Revolution Books
9 W. 19th St.

EAST VILLAGE
May Day Books
135 First Ave. (btwn. 9th and 10th)

CHELSEA
Association Teypac
251 W. 14th at 8th Ave.

UPPER WEST SIDE
Labyrinth Books
112th bwn

Kim’s Video
3rd Ave. & St.

Mark’s
Kim’s Video
3rd Ave. & St.

STATEN ISLAND
Meddy Cup Coffee House
388 Van Duven

WASHING RON HEIGHTS
Cafe Capo Verde
187th St. and Ft. Washington Ave.

SOUTH BRONX
Freedom Community Center
455 140th St.

WOODSIDE
Queens Pride House
6703 Woodside Ave.

Alan’s Alley Videos has the best selection of movies in New York City. 207-9th Ave # A [23rd street]. [212] 645-0999

Three Jewels Cafe is a unique non-profit offering free internet access and a gret library for borrowing and browsing books. 211 E. 5th Street (between Bowery and 2nd Ave.) www.threejewels.org

Bluestockings is New York’s women’s bookstore: 172 Allen Street. www.bluestockings.com

Soft Skull Press publishes fearless, progressive, punkrock/hip-hop literature. And they have a store in Brooklyn at 71 Bond Street (at State Street). www.softskull.com

Powell’s Books: After you find it on Amazon, order it from this Portland-based bookseller’s online store. www.powells.com

Seven Stories Press is a small independent publishing house that consistently publishes many important voices far removed from the corporate publishing sector. www.sevenstories.com

Fat Beats is the premiere place for hip hop albums. 406 Avenue of the Americas. [212] 673-3883

ABOUT

MediaChannel.org is a non-profit, public interest website dedicated to global media issues. www.mediacchannel.org

Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR) is a national media watchdog. www.fair.org

Reclaim The Media has all the information you need to fight the FCC. www.reclaimthemedia.org

The Alternative Press Center is a collective dedicated to providing access to and increasing public awareness of the Alternative Press. www.altpress.org

Lettres to the Editor can be sent to the above address, or by email to: inmc-nyc-print@indymedia.org
MIXED HARVEST FOR GARDENS

By Cathy Bussewitz

Gardeners throughout New York City’s five boroughs are working together to negotiate the results of the city’s recent community gardens settlement, which is impacting communities in as many ways as there are beans in the vegetable patch. In the South Bronx, professors from Hostos Community College who garden at Hostos-Crimmons camped out with the More Gardens! Coalition for several weeks to save their garden from development by South Bronx Churches.

They had received notices that bulldozers would be there any day. The garden has since been bulldozed.

In East Brooklyn, the Brownsville Gardens Coalition is asking why they are facing a greater threat than any other neighborhood in the city. Brownsville is home to 10 of the 38 gardens that are scheduled for immediate development.

“[At] the settlement,” said Justine Roper of the coalition. “We’re gathering as much support as we can, seeing what legal action we can take.”

On Sept. 17, New York State Attorney General Eliot Spitzer’s office settled a lawsuit it had filed against the City of New York regarding planned community garden demolition. The settlement puts an end to the temporary restraining order that has been protecting community gardens for the past two years, and outlines which gardens will be protected and which will be sold to real estate developers.

Of the 532 gardens covered by the agreement, 186 will keep Parks Department protection, and 198 Green Thumb gardens will be offered to the Parks Department or land trusts. On the downside, 38 gardens are subject to immediate development and 110 gardens are subject to development after review.

Nobody knows how the officials of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) determined which gardens would be saved. That includes the lead lawyers from Spitzer’s office, who sat at the table during negotiations.

But elsewhere in the city, groups whose gardens are going to be offered for preservation are debating whether it is best that they be protected by the Parks Department, or one of several land trusts.

Amid the confusion, gardeners agree upon one thing: it is time to come together to learn to advocate for themselves.

The agreement does give rights and advantages to gardeners. Those that are going to be developed must be offered an alternative site by the city. And those that are not yet preserved are required to go through an environmental review before they can be sold, a protection they did not have before.

But even with these protections, gardeners have to work hard at advocating for their land.

“The gardeners are the ones that have to really take charge,” said Alban Calderon of the Trust for Public Land.

Gardeners agree, and are exploring strategies as they exercise their rights.

Francisca “Paco” Delgado, 81, has been gardening at the Hostos-Crimmons community garden in the South Bronx since the garden was created in 1995. Biology students at nearby Hostos Community College grow medicinal plants and spend time there with their children. The land on which the garden sits is owned by South Bronx Churches which wants to develop housing on the site. On Nov. 21, the garden was levelled by a bulldozer despite Hostos’ offer to find a alternative site for housing. PHOTO: AMANDA BERNAL

BILLBURG STINK-UP:
Powerplant looms over Brooklyn neighborhood

By Di ana Wurn

At the age of 31, Adam Victor opened his first 80-megawatt power plant in Syracuse, New York. Now Victor is nearing 50, and he dreams bigger. He plans to build a 1,100-megawatt natural gas fired power plant, with 328-foot smoke stacks (taller than the Statue of Liberty), on a nine-acre waterfront site along the border of Williamsburg and Greenpoint.

If things go his way, the cogeneration power plant will be churning out heat and power within four years at North 12th Street and Kent Avenue.

“TransGas promised a lot of things in Syracuse that didn’t happen,” said Pat de Angelis, of the East River Greenhouse. “They didn’t agree with the settlement,” said Justine Roper of the coalition. “We’re gathering as much support as we can, seeing what legal action we can take.”

On Sept. 17, New York State Attorney General Eliot Spitzer’s office settled a lawsuit it had filed against the City of New York regarding planned community garden demolition. The settlement puts an end to the temporary restraining order that has been protecting community gardens for the past two years, and outlines which gardens will be protected and which will be sold to real estate developers.

According to Rolf Carle of the Taskforce, this is just one of Victor’s moves. “Victor must collect environmental impact studies on the project,” said Carle.

Victor’s motto: divide and rule,” said Carle. The P A L Council then joined the Taskforce.

Waterfront Taskforce, a coalition of more than 100 community groups that oppose the plan, note that 2,000 tons of toxic emissions will be pumped out annually from the proposed plant. The towering smoke stacks would spew emissions up to 2.5 miles and wind could carry the toxins toward more densely populated sections of town.

TransGas Energy spokesperson Colleen Roche called the proposed plant a “beautiful and stunning” addition to the neighborhood. When asked specifically about the side effects of the emissions, she said the plant uses “a clean, state-of-the-art natural gas technology.” The project is in the “pre-application” phase of development, which means Victor must collect environmental impact studies on the project. An application is expected by year’s end.

Victor is planning to open his checkbook to various community groups, hoping to influence supporters before the application goes in. But his greenbacks offensive has already run into the opposition.

In October, Victor was denied participation in the local Pulaski Day parade. Parade organizers in the cash-strapped community were promised $10,000, but they declined on principle.

Earlier in April, Victor offered $10,000 to the Polish-American Leadership (PAL) Council for “an independent” air quality study. When the matter was discussed with the Waterfront Taskforce, the check was voided and returned to Victor. The PAL Council then joined the Taskforce.

According to Rolf Carle of the Taskforce, this is just one of the ploys Victor used to promote his plant. “That’s Adam Victor’s motto: divide and rule,” said Carle.

Adam Victor (inset) wants to build an 1,100 megawatt natural gas power plant on the Williamsburg waterfront over the objections of neighborhood residents concerned about its effects on healths.

"TransGas will not abandon its proposed project if vocal segments of the community oppose it," reads the TransGas website.

Does not have to alter its plans. “TransGas will not abandon its proposed project if vocal segments of the community oppose it," reads the TransGas website.

George Sempes, a 15-year resident of Williamsburg, voiced concern about how a project that faces vehement opposition could proceed. “Not one person in the entire neighborhood supports it,” he said. "Gov. George Pataki is the one person who could pull the plug on it."

"The whole deal is stinky," echoed community member Christine Holosazc at a recent benefit for groups opposing the power plant.

Neighbors worry about the health effects of so many power plants in one concentrated area. Five existing or proposed power plants already occupy a 1.5 mile section along the waterfront. The newly proposed plant would be built a few blocks from a church, a school and homes in a community that has struggled for years to create a more liveable environment.

The new facility will generate nitrogen oxides, carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide, and volatile compounds like benzene and formaldehyde.

Members from the Greenpoint-Williamsburg Waterfront Taskforce, a coalition of more than 100 community groups that oppose the plan, note that 2,000 tons of toxic emissions will be pumped out annually from the proposed plant. The towering smoke stacks would spew emissions up to 2.5 miles and wind could carry the toxins toward more densely populated sections of town.

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Stock brokers dive for coins, learn to share

Following in the footsteps of Abbie Hoffman's legendary 1967 "money drop," that halted trading at the New York Stock Exchange, members of a group of New York University students, including the Simple Way "redistributed" $1,200 in paper money and $1,000 in coins in front of the NYSE in October.

As the bills began to fall, three bankers were unfurled, which read: "Love," "Stop Terrorism...Share," and "There is enough for everyone's need but not for everyone's greed."

Homeless people had been invited to the event by flyers stapled with one dollar bills. Stockbrokers, tourists and the homeless scrambled for coins while organizers shouted messages about sharing and love. Police responded with two dozen fully armed patrol officers, who then called for backup to prevent the sharing. One organizer was taken into custody and released.

From 1996-2000, 86 percent of the stock market's advances went to the wealthiest ten percent of the population. If hourly wages had risen at the same rate as CEO's, the average worker would be earning $110,399 per year instead of $29,267, according to thesimpleway.org.

"Out of sight, out of mind"

As Mayor Bloomberg’s "Quality of Life" campaign kicks into full gear, arrests of homeless people for offenses ranging from minor violations to felonies have sharply increased in the last month, according to a recent New York Times report. The police department’s revamped Homeless Outreach Unit now works around the clock and has been responsible for 580 homeless arrests in the month ending Nov. 11, up from 499 in the previous month. In the same last month period, 288 homeless people were arrested.

The arrests have drawn objections from members of the Outreach Unit itself. "We don’t want to be out there from the New York City Civil Liberties Union. "They want arrest numbers; it is that simple," said one member of the Outreach Unit. "They are asking for us to be offered to the homeless. They are encouraging mass arrests."

Student protests escalate across NYC

Over 2,000 students walked out of classes on Nov. 20 and marched down the middle of Broadway from Union Square to Washington Square Park.

On the same day, 25 New School University students occupied the office of school president and former Senator Bob Kerrey, a supporter of the war on Iraq which backs the war.

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Patterson was also denied her right to consult with her attorney in confidence. "After a seven-hour drive, we were only allowed one 10-minute insecure conversa-
tion," says Heath. "My ability to prepare her case was hindered." Patterson regained her freedom only by accepting a plea bar-
gain in which she promised not to interfere with the demolition of her home.

Her ex-husband, one of Halbritter's associates, has now challenged Patterson for custody of her two daughters and son on the grounds that she is homeless.

Halbritter representative Jerry Reid refused to comment on Patterson’s case, saying only, “That situation is over.”

Patterson adds that the many criminal reports that the Oneidas have filed against the tribal police — including a 1996 assault on Patterson’s 70-year-old mother — to the local Madison County District Attorney’s office have “all been ignored.”

This is a severe violation of … international law. All indigenous people have a right to be free of cruel and inhumane treat-
ment,” she said.

Since Patterson is now homeless and has been denied compensation for her destroyed home and belongings, she and her family are looking for a seasonal home.

For more info on how to help, go to oneidasfordemocracy.org.
Bushwick students buck military

continued from cover

Under the No Child Left Behind Act, students or their par-
tents can sign an opt-out form to prevent information from being released. In late September, the city’s Department of Education mailed the forms to parents of over a quarter million high school students, giving them an Oct. 15 reply deadline. Reyes says most Bushwick Outreach students were unaware of the forms and were barraged by recruiter appeals soon after the deadline passed.

The students’ frustration at their loss of privacy boiled over on Oct. 23 when about 60 of them held a protest in front of nearby Bushwick High School. They demanded a reversal of the opt-out form, which would allow their information to be released only with their permission.

“It’s for us to decide if we want to give them information,” says Gonzalez, who along with Reyes is also an organizer for the Youth Power project of Make the Road by Walking, a Bushwick-based community organization. “If we want to sign up, we can walk down to the recruiting station on Myrtle Avenue.”

Commander Edward Gehlke, head of Navy recruiting in New York, poured more fuel on the fire by responding to the protest in a letter to the New York Daily News, stating that most Bushwick students were plagued by police and drug problems and wouldn’t be eligible to enlist if they tried.

“It’s clear what the high people in the Navy and the military think about people of color in poor neighborhoods,” Gonzalez says. “So, you’re not going to get them in.”

Captain John Caldwell, public affairs officer for the Marine Corps 1st Recruiting District, which encompasses New York City, says the military is simply trying to offer students another opportunity. “They get tons of information from colleges when they are looking at going to school,” he says. “We’re also providing information that could help them get an education and a job.”

Yet these promises of education and training are misleading, critics say. The present-day G.I. Bill is fraught with loopholes and stringent conditions that cause many soldiers to lose their educational benefits. Most soldiers train on equipment that is obsolete or has no civilian counterpart, or they perform specific functions on one or two machines, leaving them with few real world skills.

“Somebody who was a cook at McDonald’s who learns how to pick up a tray of prepared food put in a heater, heat it up and wrap it, couldn’t walk in the door of a regular restaurant and say I want to be a chef,” says John McCrie, of the John Jay College Law and Justice Program.

“The new recruits are more cautious,” says McCrie, of the John Jay College Law and Justice Program. “They want to have a career. They want to be the cannon fodder.”

While the Bushwick students were able to hold a protest, the Army recruiters continued to hand out information at Bushwick High School the day after the protest. They were denied access to the protest itself.

Behind the scenes, the city’s Department of Education has released the forms. In late September, the Department of Education released the forms with an opt-out provision, donde the students or their parents can sign an opt-out form to prevent the release of their information to recruiters. The department has also released the forms with an opt-out provision, allowing students to opt out of having their information released. However, the department has not yet announced when the forms will be released. In the meantime, students and parents are encouraged to take action to opt out of having their information released.
BIG BROTHER ARRIVES

BY IMC STAFF

“Smile, you’re on virtual candid cam-

era. If the Pentagon has its way, every
American — from the Nebraskan farmer
to the Wall Street banker — will find
themselves under the accusatory cyber-

stare of an all-powerful national security
apparatus.” Those were the words of
Laura W. Murphy, director of the
American Civil Liberties Union
Washington National Office as the fed-

eral government prepared to okay the mas-

sive Homeland Security Act.

The Senate approved the sweeping leg-

islation on Nov. 19, a week after the
House, and the bill is expected to be on
the president’s desk by the end

of November.

Sen. Robert Byrd (D-W.V.) called the
Act the most far-

reaching legisla-
tion he has seen
in his 50 years in
Washington. The
ACLU, Byrd and
conservative
New York Times colum-
nist William Safire
were among the few
warning the country
about what might follow.

In a Nov. 14 column titled
“You Are a Suspect,” Safire wrote:

“Every purchase you make with a credit
card, every magazine subscription you buy
and medical prescription you fill, 
every website you visit and e-mail you
send or receive, every academic grade you
receive, every bank deposit you make, 
every trip you book and every event you
attend — all these transactions and com-
nunications will go into what the Defense
Department describes as ‘a virtual, cen-
tralized grand database.’”

The plan includes a project named Total
Information Awareness. It calls for the
world’s most expansive electronic surveil-

lance system to be run by the Information
Awareness Office, which could monitor
everyone in the name of the war on terror.

Search warrants will not be needed.

Heading the project is former National
Security Adviser Adviser Adm. John Poindexter,
who may be best known for being convict-
ed of five felonies for lying to Congress
and destroying thousands of government
documents as part of the Iran-Contra Affair.

According to critics, the Homeland
Security Act goes much further than creat-

ing an electronic Big Brother.

Says Byrd, “It is a compromise of our
personal liberties. It is a compromise of
the privacy rights of our people. It is a
compromise of the checks and balances. It
is a compromise of the separation of pow-
ers. It is a compromise of the American
people’s right to know.”

Under the language approved by the
House, the Homeland Security Act:
• Represents the largest reorganization
of the government since the Cairo
summit.
• Impinges on the First Amendment.
• Empowers the presi-
dent to secretly real-
locate funds with-
in the depart-
ment, usurping Congress’ con-
stitutional power to budget funds.
• Exempts the department from
the Freedom of Information Act
including information that private companies pro-
vide the government. (The
Albany Times Union notes that the follow-
ing scenario could occur: A company
knowingly violated pollution laws could
hide its wrongdoing, and escape lawsuits,
otherwise.
In addition, according to the American
Association of Physicians and Surgeons, a
section of the bill titled “Administration of
Counter Measures Against Smallpox”
would allow the government to administer
“forced immunizations, detention and quar-
tines.”

In Congressional testimony in September
Byrd noted, “The President has
proclaimed that we are entering a ‘new
era,’ one that will resemble the cold war in
its concerns for national security. His pro-
posal marks a disturbing start for this era and
I am afraid may be a sign of things to
come. The cold war began with an iron
curtain descending over Europe. Under
this bill, the war on terror may have begun
with an iron curtain descending around our
government.”

9/11 PROBE: BUSH GETS HIS WAY AGAIN

BY MIKE WU

The question “How did this happen?”
still lingers. Many relatives of the victims
of the September 11 attacks and politi-
cians have been asking this. They have
been prodding the government for an official
inquiry, but thanks to an obstinate White
House, the investigation will not be as
far-reaching or as unbiased as they would
have liked.

Various groups of relatives and con-
gressmen had been at loggerheads with the
White House for months over the
details. Bush and company won two
major concessions: the ability to appoint
a chairman, and raising the number of
votes required for a subpoena to be
issued from five to six out of the eleven
commission members.

The proposal marks a disturbing start for this era
its concerns for national security. His pro-
posal marks a disturbing start for this era
and from investigating whatever and
whomever it wished.

The Bush administration also wanted
the commission to wrap up its findings
within a year. Senators from both parties
believed they would need at least
18 months to two years to complete the
probe. That length of time would have
meant the report (and any embarrassing
findings) would come out in the middle
of President George W. Bush’s re-elec-
tion campaign.

Bush and company also called for
sharp limits on the scope of the investiga-
tion. Rather than focusing on intelligence,
the White House wanted the independent
commission to investigate other areas,
including aviation security, border con-
trol, immigration policy, and the response
of the North American Aerospace
Defense Command.

The demand for limits on the scope of
the investigation was especially stinging
for those who lost loved ones. “More
than half an hour after the second Trade
Tower attack, the Pentagon was attacked.
Weren’t they scrambled to intercept
that airliner?” Push asked.

The actions of the White House caused
many to question the administration’s real intentions. Sen.
Joseph I. Lieberman (D-Conn.) asked the White House, “Do
you really want to allow this commission to be created?
And if you don’t, why not?” A coalition of four groups of fami-
lies issued a statement saying they could not
understand why the administration declared it supported an investiga-
tion “while apparently doing everything in its
power to prevent the commission from being
established.” Leaders of family
groups promised a high-pressure campa-
ign against the Bush administration if
the commission proposal was rejected.

Not long after that, an agreement was
reached.

Commission members may be appointed as soon as Dec. 15.

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www.DECEMBER1.net
Pundits, politicians and spin doctors have diagnosed “lack of message” as the disease the Democrats suffered in November’s elections. The criticism is misplaced. If the Democrats failed to stand for anything in the midterm elections, it is because their corporate patrons are their only true constituencies.

Absent an active social base pushing them to adopt progressive legislation, they have shown themselves incapable of opposing corporate cronyn and tax cuts for the rich.

How could the Democrats assail the Republican party for Enron when they were also on the take? It’s like a $25 hooker calling a $100 prostitute sleazy.

Contrasts of the Republicans’ extreme agenda should instead ponder the shift through the years from debating the contours of the welfare state to arguing about the parameters of the police state.

The G.O.P. stranglehold on power has been decades in the making, starting in the 1960s with Richard Nixon’s “silent majority” and crises of “law and order,” it solidified with the “moral majority” and the 1980 victory of Ronald Reagan.

While the Republicans have some inherent advantages, namely as the party of capital and the military-security apparatus, they have also mobilized social movements, white-flight suburbanites, right-to-lifers and evangelicals, in favor of their authoritarian agenda.

In contrast, the movements that used to hold the Democrats’ feet to the fire — labor, environmentalists, feminists, blacks, Latinos — are in disarray. Unions are in perpetual decline, unable to get legislation passed that would make organizing more hospitable. The big environmental groups are fundraising machines making comfortable lounging in the halls of power than stirring up the grassroots. The feminist agenda, at least nationally, is limited to abortion rights. And while blacks and Latinos have made dramatic gains in political power since the civil rights era, there are no prominent groups or leaders pushing a visionary agenda.

The Republicans have a vision, albeit a creepy one: that of a divinely ordained, free-market, iron-fisted paternalism, a triumvirate of market, the military and God. It is the vision that pits America as the force of righteousness in the global crusade against terrorism and the evil hordes of Islam. Closer to home, it is the vision that capitalizes on suburban fears of poor, darker-skinned “others” by continuing a savage and senseless drug war.

Progressive social movements have forgotten the importance of vision. That is why Marxism-Leninism, perhaps terminally sclerotic now, was such a powerful force for so long. It had a transcendental view, historical materialism, with a historical agent of change, the revolutionary proletariat.

What is needed are movements that once again speak the language of a grand historical narrative, instead of being crippled by postmodern subjectivity. There are glimmers of hope, in the global justice movement, the Greens and the anti-war movement. The latter displayed its new-found muscle in October, spurting 133 congressional Representatives to oppose the Iraq war resolution, more than anyone predicted.

In fact, powerful social movements can even effect positive change under a Republican president, as happened under Nixon with the passage of landmark environmental laws, the Clean WaterLegacy Act, and the establishment of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration and the Environmental Protection Agency.

The wresting of power from the right will happen if the Democrats learn to market themselves better. The Republican party for Enron when they have shown themselves incapable of opposing corporate cronyn and tax cuts for the rich.

Thought the Democrats would do better than they did.

**A PARTY WITHOUT A PEOPLE**

**Dems stay loyal to fat-cat backers at expense of popular support**

BY A.K. GUPTA

While the Republicans have some inherent advantages, namely as the party of capital and the military-security apparatus, they have also mobilized social movements, white-flight suburbanites, right-to-lifers and evangelicals, in favor of their authoritarian agenda.

As a Moscow theater, killing 118 civilians.

The voluntary teach-ins will be open to parents, and each school will be able to decide when, or if, the events take place.

**Oakland schools approve anti-war teach-ins**

“When you go to war, you are setting a bad example for all the kids in the USA,” a Sequoia Elementary fifth-grader wrote to President Bush. “Wars and fights are not right!” She and other Oakland students from grades K-12 will soon have the chance to participate in teach-ins and learn more about what a war on Iraq might mean after the Oakland School Board unanimously approved in-school teach-ins about the Iraq war Nov. 13. “The pendulum of war with Iraq is a matter that has the most serious consequences for people in this country,” said School Board President Dan Siegel.

The Oakland School Board’s decision to approve teach-ins comes on the heels of a series of anti-war actions in the region’s worse human rights abuses. SOA protest

“Blood for Oil is gearing up for anti-war actions planned for MLK day in Washington, D.C. This January will honor Martin Luther King, Jr.’s birthday by resisting war with Iraq. The International ANSWER (Act Now to Stop War and End Racism) Coalition has put out a national call for a march on January 18 and a “Grassroots Peace Congress” on January 19. A West Coast group is also planning of ANSWER actions in San Francisco.”

**Talking to a Nervous Nation**

**By NANDOR SALA**

I worked at a telephone survey firm before the election. We took polls on races ranging from Senate to state contests for governor, agricultural commissioner, Supreme Court judges and state representatives, and local matches such as county commissioner and freeholder.

After some screening questions, which eliminated ineligible voters, we asked, “What issue is most important to you in deciding your vote?”

Among prelisted responses three choices ran neck and neck among respondents: reducing unemployment and creating jobs; restoring honesty and integrity to government; and improving national security and fighting the war on terrorism.

Voters in South Dakota, New Hampshire and Kansas were more concerned with terrorism and national security and felt more comfortable in states with major urban centers like New York, Florida or California.

Protecting social security and improving education were also popular, while providing tax relief received few votes.

However, when people were allowed to name any issue, economy and jobs was overwhelmingly number one everywhere. “I don’t know” was a distant number two. Schools and education was absolutely last among any regularity.

National security and the war on terrorism were rarely mentioned.

How good was I in predicting races with my inside scoop? Early on I knew Elizabeth Dole would easily win the open Senate seat in North Carolina, by the number of doors in her home who said they were going to vote for her. I knew that in the last week Jeb Bush was pulling away in Florida, that the South Dakota Senate race was going to be a cliffhanger, and that California Governor Gray Davis was hanging by a thread.

Then again, I also thought the Democrats would win the Senate seat in New Hampshire, that Tony Sanchez would be the next governor of Texas and that the Democrats would hold on to the Governorship of South Carolina. Like most people I thought the Democrats would do better than they did.

**“When people were allowed to name any issue, economy and jobs was overwhelmingly number one everywhere.”**

What was the X-factor? It was national security. People were and are afraid. It wasn’t Bush beating the war drums on Iraq and drowning out all other issues. When I started polling in late June, with the corporate scandals dominating the headlines, people were still afraid. Maybe people in New York have gotten used to it, but across America many people still worry and think about homeland security.
Students & labor make common cause
Living wage battles rage on college campuses

BY TONY PECINOVSKY

Think of Harvard and what immediately comes to mind is wealth, prestige and Kennedys. But, like many college campuses, there is a dark side to how workers on the campus are treated.

Harvard students, in April 2001, staged a 21-day sit-in on behalf of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 254. Harvard, the second wealthiest non-profit institution in the world, “was paying us poverty wages,” said Frank Morley, a Harvard janitor.

Harvard’s rival, Yale, is also on the forefront of student-labor coalition building. Last September, 800 Yale students and workers were arrested in a non-violent protest, demonstrating for the demands of the Restaurant and Hotel Employees Union for a contract that would include reasonable wage increases.

These examples of student-initiated solidarity are one of many recent incidents in which youth and students have pressured campus administrations to sign union contracts. Student activism is a response to the non-union agreement contracts when campus employees such as janitors, service employees and groundskeepers are in contract negotiations.

Between 1994 and 2001, Harvard janitors’ wages fell 30 percent and two-thirds of all Harvard janitors could not afford health care. Many worked two or three jobs. In 1998, Harvard refused to adopt a living-wage standard similar to that of the city of Cambridge, where Harvard is located.

After the sit-in, things began to change. In Feb. 2002, Harvard agreed to a new union contract. Janitors at the school received an immediate raise, bringing their wages above the local living wage. By 2005, they will make $14 an hour.

As part of the contract, janitors also received full health insurance for their family members and a guarantee from the university that all subcontracted workers will receive equal pay and benefits.

“One thing that makes SLAP unique is its ability to bring union ‘resources, manpower and training’ to campaigns on the campus,” said Julia Beatty, New York coordinator for SLAP, referring to “facilities networking, relationship building and training,” to address issues that affect students and union members.

This is especially important for youth that have had very little experience with trade unions and aren’t familiar with the power that collective bargaining can yield.

“Nothing existed nationally to connect youth and students to labor,” said Beatty.

One thing that makes SLAP unique is its focus on organizing the unorganized. “Nothing existed nationally to ‘include youth into the labor movement,’” said Rodriguez. He added, “The goal of the AFL-CIO is to organize the unorganized. And youth are a part of that.”

Despite the fact that SLAP and FLY approach the student/youth/worker intersection from different angles, both groups fight for young people’s needs.

New York City SLAP is currently mobilizing support for trade unions to fight another round of tuition hikes at the City University of New York (CUNY), which are likely to force thousands of students out of college. According to Beatty, 29,000 students couldn’t afford to attend college after the last tuition hike. A new round of tuition hikes will probably have the same effect.

One way that FLY has addressed issues unique to young workers is by hosting a ‘Young Trade Unionists School. FLY’s first school, held this past September, was a daylong event with 40 young unionists. Not only did it focus on the basics of organizing, leadership development, labor law and workers rights, it also brought young workers together.

While many students are workers, FLY doesn’t consider itself a student-labor organization. Organizing students who work is seen as part of an overall strategy to “include youth into the labor movement,” said Rodriguez. He added, “The goal of the AFL-CIO is to organize the unorganized. And youth are a part of that.”

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- JEREMY CRONIN & JOHN SAUL—Exchange on South Africa
MIAMI—When 211 Haitian immigrants landed near Miami in late October, they soon learned there are different sets of rules for asylum seekers—one for Cubans, and another for everyone else. Shortly after their wooden freighter had run aground, helicopter cameras captured footage of men jumping overboard to swim for their lives. Women were also seen throwing their children from the ship with hopes that someone might catch them before they hit the water. The desperation of these most recent Haitian refugees highlights an immigration policy that many characterize as hypocritical.

In December 2001, President Bush supported an INS regulation that applied only to Haitians: that all Haitian asylum seekers coming from sea would be indefinitely detained (i.e. jailed) while they await a decision on their immigration status. But in mid-November, to almost no press attention, the INS announced it would expand this widely criticized detention policy to all asylum seekers except Cubans coming from sea. “It is inhumane,” said U.S. Rep. Alcee Hastings (D-Fla). “Rather than include Haitians in a humane policy as existed for everybody but Haitians, now they put everybody under an inhumane policy.”

In contrast, immigrating Cubans have fared much better. In 1966 the U.S. government created an exemption to immigration law known as the Cuban Adjustment Act. Since then tens of thousands of Cuban immigrants have arrived onto Florida shores and legally made their way into the community. Fearful of being detained, Haitian individuals who made it ashore following the October incident were seen streaming across the bordering highway in a frenzied attempt to escape U.S. Coast Guard officials and reach freedom. Some of them desperately waved down traffic, climbed onto pickup trucks, or hung onto luggage grills of vehicles.

Too hungry and thirsty to run, most were herded into custody. Other Haitians were pulled from the waters via speedboat as they tried to swim ashore. This latest wave of Haitian immigration has put the spotlight on a community desperately calling for equal treatment. Two days after the Oct. 29 landing, U.S. Rep. Carrie Meek (D-Fla.) confronted a smiling Jeb Bush at a campaign stop in North Miami. Meek implored the Governor to urge his brother, President Bush, to intervene in favor of the recently detained Haitian refugees. Meek stated that President Bush could intervene on behalf of the recently detained Haitian refugees. Meek stated that President Bush could intervene on behalf of Haitians by calling into effect the “wet-foot dry-foot” policy, which allows Haitians by calling into effect the “wet-foot dry-foot” policy, which allows Cubans, and another for everyone else.

211 Haitians landed South of Miami Oct. 29, igniting an election year controversy over U.S. immigration policy. Under the 1966 Cuban Adjustment Act, Cuban refugees are interviewed by the INS and then released while their asylum petitions are processed. They are eligible for U.S. citizenship within a year of their arrival. The INS has defended its preferential treatment of Cuban “It’s apples and oranges,” INS spokesperson Marta Elena Garcia told the Bergen Record in New Jersey. “You can’t compare the situation of Cuban refugees with any- other, whether it’s Haitians or Guatemalans or Mexicans.” Further evidence of the discrepancy in immigration policy recently occurred Nov. 11 when eight asylum seekers from around the world were herded into custody. Two Florida National Guard jets escorted them and they were received at the airport like movie stars, with drinks and camera flashes.

TERROR WAR TURNS ON CANADIANS

Canadian Maher Arar was deported to Syria by the U.S. as he passed through JFK Airport. Although he is a Canadian citizen, U.S. officials did not notify the Canadian consulate of his plans to deport Arar to Syria, where he hadn’t lived in 15 years. Interrogations and detentions of Canadians are not being targeted at just Muslims. One of Canada’s most acclaimed authors, the Indian-born Rohinton Mistry, cut short a U.S. book tour after one too many interrogations. And Michel Jalbert, 32, of Quebec, remains in a Maine jail a month after he tried to buy gas in a northern Maine bordertown. Police spotted a hunting rifle in his truck. A background check revealed that 13 years ago he had committed a crime and thus could not legally enter the country with a weapon. He could face six months in prison.

You won’t see this on COPS Corporate crime such as price fixing, fraud, pollution and public corruption inflict far more damage on society than all street crimes combined, according to corporate crime reporter Russell Mokhiber. While the FBI estimates that burglary and robbery (street crimes) cost the nation $3.8 billion dollars a year, hundreds of billions of dollars are stolen from Americans as a result of corporate and white collar fraud, says Mokhiber. Health care fraud alone costs Americans $100 billion to $400 billion a year. The savings and loan fraud cost from $300 to $500 billion.

Court keeps “War on Drugs” out of doctor’s office In a unanimous decision, a federal appeals court recently ruled that the government cannot revoke licenses of California doctors who recommend medical marijuana treatment for their patients. The ACLU Drug Policy Litigation Specialist, Graham Boyd, argued that the First Amendment protects the discussion of risks and benefits between patient and doctor, and the right to privacy. The ruling will allow medical providers freedom to discuss medical marijuana all they want, including the dangerous side effects, which include the possibility of ingestion of an entire bag of Oreo’s in one sitting.

Prescription drugs in your cornflakes Half a million bushels of soybeans were recently destroyed in Nebraska after they were contaminated by trace amounts of an experimental corn genetically engineered to produce a vaccine against traveler’s diarrhea. The corn was produced by Texas-based ProdiGene, one of the leaders of a nascent “biopharming” industry that uses corn, barley, rice and tobacco to grow everything from injectable insulin and cholera vaccines to industrial enzymes for tanning leather. “Someone is going to get prescription drugs in their cornflakes,” said Larry Bohlen of Friends of the Earth.
Ethnic press offers a world of words

BY GABRIEL WOODHOUSE

New York City is the “media capital” of English-speaking America with over 100 ethnic publications. In the metropolitan area, the city is also the epicenter of a vibrant alternative press.

Founded in 2000, the Independent Press Association of New York (IPA-NY) is the only association of ethnic and community publications in the city. Working closely with community organizations and social justice groups, the non-profit helps small presses with loans, technical assistance, and access to a variety of resources.

Among its many projects, IPA-NY publishes a free weekly selection of unique stories from different ethnic publications in “Voices That Must Be Heard.” The stories present perspectives on a wide range of issues from various cultures, translated into English.

The following is a collection of some articles that appeared in “Voices” over the last year. For the full stories, go to www.indypress.org

“Lack of interpreters harms immigrant patients, charges community organization” by Ana Ledo, El Diario / La Prensa, February 22, 2002

Latino immigrants protested the lack of interpreters in public Brooklyn hospitals last month, after the Brooklyn community organization Make the Road by Walking released a report detailing immigrants’ inability to communicate with their doctors.

“Legal immigrants sue for rights to food stamps” by L. Forg Russian Forward, July 5, 2002

A coalition of social advocates is suing New York to open the state food stamp program to all poor, documented immigrants. Two of the plaintiffs—73-year-old Brooklyn residents Yankel and Vera Teitelmans, are immigrants from Ukraine and Holocaust survivors. The Teitelmans receive welfare, but live on food donated by charitable organizations, as do most of the plaintiffs named.

“NYPD Desi” by Sujeeet Rajan, Indian Express, December 30 2001

Accord to unofficial figures, there are fewer than 20 Indian police officers in the New York Police Department and not a single Indian works as a firefighter. Here are recollections of two Indian NYPD officers working in Manhattan on September 11.

“Daddy, don’t be a fool” by Funmi Adepitan, African Abroad, 15 April 2002

Longy Anyanwu spent four years in a New Jersey jail for contempt after insisting that his children be brought up in his home country of Nigeria. His recent release reopens the debate about the best place for African immigrants to raise their kids: America or Africa?

“Bangladeshi-American Drops ‘Mohammad’ from his name due to fears of discrimination” by Labia Anwar, Weekly Thikana, 3 January 2002

Though regrettable, it’s true that one Bangladeshi-American has abandoned “Mohammad” from his name through an affidavit. The man, formerly named Mohammad Reza, changed his name to “Reza Hary” because, he said, he was victimized because his name was Mohammad.

“It Takes a Village (Voice) to Raze the Media” by MARK PICKENS

When do jaded business ethics tarnish a newspaper’s hard-earned reputation for utility, progressive reporting?

Between Sept. 27 and Oct. 2, Village Voice Media (VVM) snuffed out a New York newspaper on 24-hours notice, slit the throat of a union drive at the chain’s second-largest paper and sealed a deal with its biggest rival to divide up markets in two cities. The actions have attracted the attention of the Justice Department’s anti-trust division, according to sources close to the deals.

The events have left staffers at the six VVM-owned publications asking what’s happened to America’s alternative press. “It just shows that alternative media is now a part of big media business,” said Yvonne Kubrin, former editor-in-chief of the now-defunct Cleveland Free Times.

VVM head David Schneiderman pulls the levers for a consortium of Wall Street investment bankers and venture capitalists that bought the Village papers for a reported $150 million in January 2001. This was a step up for Schneiderman, who was previous-ly the paper’s ad staff petitioned to join the already unionized Village.

“We definitely think of David Schneiderman as the Wicked Witch of the West,” says Erin Aubrey, staff writer and union president at VVM’s LA Weekly.

The 2001 deal brought the 57-year-old Voice under the combined ownership of the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, a group of Dutch investors and Goldman Sachs, America’s third-largest brokerage house.

The new management now owns some of the most-respected alternative newspapers in America, including the Pulitzer Prize-winning Village Voice, the LA Weekly, the City Pages in Minneapolis, the Seattle Weekly, the OC Register in California’s Orange County and the Nashville Scene.

With a combined circulation of 900,000 copies and annual revenue of $90 million, VVM is the largest alternative chain in the country.

It took just months for VVM to institute its new bare-knuckles management style. In May, a dispute over unionizing the LA Weekly’s advertising depart-ment began to divide journalists and managers at the paper. Pressed by escalating sales quotas, post-September 11 layoffs and other job security issues, the paper’s ad staff petitioned to join the already unionized writing staff.

Given the Weekly’s unwavering editorial stance as an ally of labor unions, employees were stunned when the new Schneiderman-appointed publisher, Beth Sestanovich, deployed every means at her disposal to defeat the organizing campaign.

“It was like Union Busting 101,” says Aubrey. After questionable tactics, including intimidation, withholding of raises, and hiring a well-known “labor relations” law firm to help squash the union drive, pro-union staff were defeated by just two votes in an election held on Sept. 27.

“We’re regarded as the gold standard of labor support in America and at the same time its parent company was squashing its own employees’ union drive in LA,” says Aubrey.

Howard Blume, staff writer and vice-president of the writers’ union at the LA Weekly, thinks these changes bode ill not just for the employees, but the public at large.

“There’s both a consolidation of media ownership and a shrinking of media jobs and that’s bad in every way possible,” says Blume. “There seems to be more news and more media than ever, but it’s a mile wide and only an inch deep.”

Want to join the IndyMedia Revolution but aren’t sure how?

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SHARK ATTACKS, SNIPERS AND THUGS, OH MY!

BY EMILY REINHARDT

Mothers use their bodies as human shields, trying to protect their children as they take them to school. Drivers glance around anxiously as they gas up their cars. The streets are deserted as fearful residents stay indoors, peering into their television sets for the latest news. This is not Kabul or some other war-torn city, but suburban Washington, D.C. in the midst of last month’s sniper attacks.

The sniper attacks launched a media blitz and an accompanying public panic. It’s cause and effect: the media leaps onto a story or theme and the public fearfully watches and feels informed and entertained. Prior to snipers, there were child kidnappings; before that, there were missing interns, shark attacks, flesh-eating bacteria, school shootings, mailmen going “postal,” and countless others. News (especially local television news) often influences a person’s perceptions of the world around them. Unfortunately, the news often makes individuals feel unnecessarily afraid of their streets, their cities, their country and their world.

“...The majority of Americans who get its the information that people get, that leads to distortion.”

According to a Roper survey of television viewing, a plurality of Americans get their news from local TV broadcasts. In Los Angeles and New York, two of the biggest markets, local television news is watched three times as much as the national news broadcast. Local television news is also the most saturated of news sources with stories about violent crime; 66 percent of stories covered in 56 major markets of local news are crime stories. Stories concerning violent crime runs every three minutes during the local news broadcasts in Los Angeles.

The sheer density of crime stories gives viewers a misguided sense of the real statistics on crime: the numbers have gone down steadily in the last 20 years. In 2001, violent crime was at its lowest numbers since 1973. Youth crimes dropped over two-thirds from 1993 to 1998. Homicide dropped 33 percent in the Nineties, while national news increased its coverage of violent crime 600 percent. Prior to September 11, most Americans felt that “violent crime” was one of the worst problems facing the nation. 62 percent of Americans felt “desperate” about crime during the Nineties. Yet 76 percent of these “desperate” people had never themselves been victims of violent crime, according to a Harvard survey, but were concerned about crime “from the TV.” In poll after poll, “crime” topped the list of Americans’ concerns. Policy-makers and poll watchers took note.

“...When mainstream media over-reports on violent crime, people end up with a distorted sense of their world culture,” said Rachel Coen of the media watchdog group Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR). “[That the stories are] more frivolous is annoying, but there are real political consequences to the media concentration on these stories.”

Larger than crime statistics and surveys is the climate of fear that these stories create. They contribute to specific attitudes about race and youth and justify biased attitudes and legislative actions. Though four times as many people are hit by lightning each year than were shot by the sniper, the D.C. community’s reaction was to shut down school activities and refuse to go out of doors. “I now only gas up at my local gas station... surrounded by buildings and people. I will not go to one that is out in the open near a busy street,” said one Tacoma Park, Maryland resident in an on-line session with the Washington Post. Another Maryland resident had an even more extreme reaction: “I use my body as a shield when I drop off my son at school.”

Local crime stories are only the icing on the cake. The media write large has produced many “theme” stories over the years that were over-dramatized or later proven untrue. The difference now is that the amount of television, print and internet media far surpasses anything known previously. Stories stay longer in the public consciousness and the fear is more intense.

“Part of the problem is the 24-hour news climate. There were no cable 24-hour news channels 25 years ago and these channels have the need to fill space,” said Coen. “It’s news as a product, trying to make a profit.”

GLOBALIZATION got you down? WHO fill you with WHAT?

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HIP HOP: Don’t believe the hype

BY EMILY REINHARDT & CATHY BUSSEWITZ

Hip-hop tsunami Eminem raps about killing his mother on the Slim Shady LP and garners a multitude of magazine covers. Tupac and Biggie Smalls’ world-wide murders and the “East-West Coast” war are national folklore. Mainstream media punts behave as if hip-hop was a contagious disease. Chuck D of the group Public Enemy has a specific "hip-hop" unit dedicated to tracking the violence of the groups.

What the media ignores is the entire genre of hip-hop dedicating itself to positive messages, progressive politics and non-violence. Chuck D and Russell Simmons’ Hip-Hop 4 Peace, formed Nov. 13 in New York City, represents the leading edge of this movement.

Hip-Hop 4 Peace, which includes New York City councilman Leroy Comrie as a founder, will memorialize the slain Jam Master Jay and address the issues of violence in hip-hop by asking artists to take responsibility for their words.

“My attitude is that hip-hop and rap can go to hell if they don’t help us progress as a people. On the island of Dominica, they didn’t have our kind of violent crime until they could get (cable network) BET,” says Chuck D of the group Public Enemy. “Hip-hop has got to look itself in the mirror. It is fermenting too much negativity out here.”

Hip-hop is attempting to look in that mirror. Besides Hip-Hop 4 Peace, the International Hip Hop Conference for Peace was held at the United Nations in May 2001, with major players like DJ Grandmaster Flash and Kool DJ Herc attending. Simmons also organized a summit on hip-hop’s media image attended by Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan and David Mayes, founder of hip-hop magazine The Source.

The list of artists who have combined politics and hip-hop is impressive: Public Enemy and Chuck D., Mos Def, Dead Presidents, Queen Latifah, KRS-1, Digable Planets, The Coup, Spearhead and Michael Franti. Wyclef Jean has been arrested while protesting the New York City’s education cuts and in March rapper Paris released a track “What Would You Do?” that critiques the PATRIOT Act and the “War on Terrorism.” Michael Franti is featured in the documentary This is What Democracy Looks Like, which chronicles the 1999 World Trade Organization protests in Seattle.

But the attention these progressive artists receive is much slimmer than the bulk of mainstream attention given to raps about guns, booze and women. A Google search on “Spearhead” comes up with 198,000 hits; a Google search on Eminem comes up with over a million.

“You can have a hip-hop artist like Mos Def who has a searing political critique,” says Guy Ramey of the University of Pennsylvania. “But it will never be talked about in the same way as some guy who’s talking about whopping somebody.”
Simba Rousseau was homeless for seven and a half years. Now she has an apartment in Bushwick that she pays for with her storytelling. Starting at age 13, when she designed a house for ten dollars that would house cost the owner $500,000 at “professional” rates, Simba was never afraid to teach herself new skills and do what she needed to get by. An immigrant in her own country because she left her abusive home without any documentation, Simba has made a name for herself in the independent media world. She taught herself photo, audio and video skills and has been published in The Indypendent and Rolling Stone Magazine. She is a regular correspondent for Democracy Now! and PBS.

What started as a fly-by-night business when she was on the streets, Simba’s own project, Universal Rhythms, now produces documentaries on the prison industrial complex, detainees, and immigrant struggles.

As a black, lesbian woman living on the streets for spare change, Simba has battled some of the worst prejudices and injustices of our society. But through it all, her spirit has emerged as a determined force and it shines in her work as an independent journalist. Simba, now 27, was born in Florida and spent half of her homeless years there. We start our journey with her in NYC, which she got to by beating a master at his chess game....

Chees to me was the ultimate idea of what the game of life is. You either know how to play your pawn right or you just get fucked. That’s how street life is. So, when I won the game, I knew I had the power to do what I wanted. I could conquer them there then I could conquer them there there and then. When I was in an Indian reservation I’d hike a different mountain everyday. I left like if I could conquer them there then I could take care of those mountains in the “real world.”

I’m in this world by myself, obviously. My family is not here. I learned to be my own family, and cheer myself on in hard times. I tried every drug possible on the street. But the fact that I was interested in spirituality at a very young age is what kept me through it all. Otherwise I probably would have given up a long time ago. I felt like giving up many times, but once you’ve gone through so much, you know you’ve come this far. And after you’ve hit rock bottom, you know at least that it can’t get any worse, unless you just stay there. I didn’t want to stay there, because I also wanted to help other homeless people. I wanted to move because I couldn’t help them from where I was. I had nothing to help them with.
OLD BOY’S NETWORK: Women still confined to media’s pink ghetto

BY JENNIFER L. POZNER

Ask a feminist to identify the most important issue facing women today, and chances are, she wouldn’t immediately point to the media. But she should.

Corporate media is key to why our fast-moving culture is so slow to change, stereotypes are so stubborn and the power structure so entrenched. By determining who can and cannot speak, which issues are discussed and how they are framed, media have the power to maintain the status quo or challenge the dominant order. Without accurate, non-biased news coverage and challenging, creative cultural expression it is virtually impossible to significantly move public opinion of social justice issues and create lasting change.

And how have media used this power where women’s rights are concerned?

With a vengeance. From the earliest days of the women’s movement media have branded feminism “a hair-raising emotional orgy of hatred” led by “freaks…” incapable of coming to terms with their own natures as females” (Exquere, 1971), a “passing fad” (New York Times, 1972), and a “lost cause” (Vogue, 1983), a “failure” (Newsworld, 1990) and a “dead” movement overtun by “a whole lot of stylish fluff” (Time, 1998).

By the late 1990s news outlets from NBC to PBS portrayed feminists as waging unjust “sex wars” and heralding a “gender Armageddon.” And by the turn of the millennium Men’s Health magazine reported that “militant,” “hostile” young feminists are oppressing men on college campuses by insisting on strong sexual assault policies and women’s studies programs. Today, similar sentiments span outlets from the liberal Atlantic Monthly to the conservative Fox News Network.

This antifeminist hostility can be felt in coverage of topics editors narrowly define as “women’s issues” (e.g., rape, abortion, child care), where stereotypes are invoked and perpetuated.

Take the ways in which sexual violence is sensationalized and used to scare women into sexual and social conformity. Victim-blaming is still prevalent: “What responsibility, if any, did the women have for what happened…?” asked Dateline NBC after dozens of women were sexual assaulted in Central Park in June, 2000. Then there are the endless, frightening headlines about attempted rapes: “She couldn’t just get bored mid-attack, behind every story about an attempted rape is the reality that some woman did something to get away.” So, why no triumphant headlines about women fighting back, fending off their assailants?

A similar framing problem persists in coverage of abortion, media’s favorite hot-button “women’s issue.” Consider how the media have been to label shootings, firebombings, death threats and other politically-motivated violence against abortion providers as “terrorism.” Only after September 11, when newscasters received letters claiming to be laced with anthrax, did mainstream media finally “discover” the story — reported over the past decade in the women’s and alternative press — that anti-abortion terrorists have subjected women’s health advocates and clinics to a regular campaign of anthrax threats and violent — even fatal — crime for many frightening years (with more than 500 such letters arriving pre-9/11).

When issues fall outside journalists’ pink ghetto yet implicitly affect women’s survival (e.g., global trade, affairs of state, war), gender is rarely used as a lens for analysis. For example, poll data following September 11 showed women to be more moderate than men in their views about war. Yet corporate media presented a misleading picture of a flag-waving populace united behind the Bush push for military retaliation. Because women were nearly invisible as sources, experts and pundits in media coverage of abortion, media’s favorite hot-button “women’s issue” the story — reported over the past decade in the women’s and alternative press — that anti-abortion terrorists have subjected women’s health advocates and clinics to a regular campaign of anthrax threats and violent — even fatal — crime for many frightening years (with more than 500 such letters arriving pre-9/11).

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So, why no triumphant headlines about some woman did something to get away.
Clear Channel makes monopoly nightmare a reality

By Jeff Perlstein

SAN FRANCISCO — Think of a Texas-based multinational company that is facing a Department of Justice investigation, suits and lawsuits for inappropriate business practices, a flurry of criticism in the mainstream press, and a bill in Congress to curb its impact on the industry. Did you think Enron? Try again.

This 800-lb. Texas gorilla has rocketed to a place alongside NBC and CNN as one of the largest media companies in the United States. Through a flurry of criticism in the main- stream press, and a bill in Congress to curb its impact on the industry. One that, by its own admission, would not be thought otherwise by the public, be worried, because the problems with Clear Channel Communications are not going away any time soon.

Clear Channel has allegedly been used to pressure voice tracking is the practice of leveraging airplay against con- cert performances. Clear Channel has carved out a niche in the summer; however, the company has not been able to maintain its hold in both areas. As a result, Clear Channel now owns, operates or exclusively books the vast major- ity of amphitheaters, arenas and clubs in the country. It also con- trols the most powerful promoters, who last year sold 27 million con- cert tickets. That is 2.3 million more than the closest competitor.

Clear Channel’s modus of opera- tion is also accelerating the homog- enization of programming on the airwaves. The company shuts out independent artists who can’t afford to go through high-priced middlemen, and is responsible for taking the practice of voice track- ing to new heights (or depths, depending on your perspective).

Voice tracking is the practice of creating brief, computer-assisted voice segments that attempt to fool the listener into thinking that a program is locally produced. In fact, the same content is being broadcast to upwards of 75 stations worldwide, so it is a central site. You have one overworked DJ and the same presentation you hear the same songs, the same DJs and the same presentation when you tune in to Kiss FM.

The political terrain is really shifting,” says Robert W. McChesney, author and professor at the University of Illinois, Urbana- Champaign, in an interview by Randy Dotinga in Wirednews.com.

“At a Reclaim the Media conference in New Orleans in September, a national coalition launched a campaign strategically to coordinate efforts, amplify their impact, and link up with other media-policy initiatives.

“Nationally-recognized organiza- tions such as Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting, the Democratic Majority Legal Project, Media Alliance, and Prometheus Radio Project began mapping out steps to mobilize public pressure against Clear Channel.”

“FCC says free market, not free press

By Aliza Dichter

If you think big media aren’t serving the public, be worried, because the problems with Clear Channel Communications are not going away any time soon.

Under intense lobbying pressure and lawsuits brought by corporate media, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is now considering eliminating the media-ownership limits designed to protect diversity of viewpoints and ensure communities have media that reflect their unique issues.

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is required by law to seek public comment before eliminating rules that prevent a single company from dominating a local media market. But the FCC has refused to hold public hearings, including informal ones on issues of policy, technical, and the clock is ticking rapidly.

Despite such barriers, activists and organizers are building coalitions, and preparing petitions against what former FCC Chairman Reed Hundt has called the most radical view of media consoli- dation that any democracy has ever sup- ported … exclusively driven by ideology and business interests.”

Voice tracking is also part of another Clear Channel homoge- nizing strategy. In cities across America, they’ve set up stations with call letters which sound like KISS-FM so that everywhere you hear the same songs, the same DJs, and the same presentation when you tune in to KISS-FM. Clear Channel Communications is considering eliminating the media-ownership limits designed to protect diversity of viewpoints and ensure communities have media that reflect their unique issues.

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Rabblerousers and muckrakers

BY DONALD PANETH

Assailed as rabblerousers, wild women, muckrakers, and worse, dissenting journalists have always been lively, rambunctious and disturbing as they fought for change.

In Voices of Revolution: The Dissident Press in America, Rodger Streitmatter, professor of journalism at the University of Illinois, comes through with a down-to-earth, no-nonsense history of oppositionist publications and the long travails of radical journalists.

Their newspapers and magazines gave voice to the disenfranchised and exploited, bringing progressive issues to the forefront and articulating positions belittled or ignored by mainstream papers of the time. In most cases, the deaths of their publications remained small. The journalists themselves were radicalized by physical and psychological attacks by law enforcement authorities.

Streitmatter presents 14 case studies. He considers such figures as abolitionist publisher William Lloyd Garrison; William Heighton, editor of the first labor papers in America; Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony; pioneering feminists; Julius Augustus Wayland; socialists; and Emma "Red Emma" Goldman, anarchists.

He examines the work of Robert S. Abbott, publisher of the weekly Chicago Defender who encouraged oppressed southern blacks to head north; Margaret Sanger, who demanded wide availability of birth control information; Dorothy Day, founder of the Catholic Worker; I.F. Stone who was blanked out by the traditional press, founded I.F. Stone's Weekly; and scored beats by digging through government documents; Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale, who established not only the Black Panther party but its newspaper which marked up a weekly circulation of 100,000.

It's not a short list. More than a few of these non-traditional journalists ended up badly. Wayland committed suicide. Parsons was hung. Goldman was deported. Sanger fled the country. John Sinclair, editor of a Sixties-era Detroit paper, was sentenced to 10 years in prison for possessing two marijuana cigarettes. Fred Hampton, a Chicago leader of the Black Panther party who contributed to its newspaper, was shot to death in a police raid.

Streitmatter's story begins in the 1820s with America's first labor paper — Heighton's Mechanics' Fee Press. Heighton was a shoemaker who bought a used printing press and launched the weekly, four-page paper, with his wife Ann setting type. He campaigned for a ten-hour workday, opposed child labor and demanded tax-supported schools. The paper, published from 1828 to 1831, reached a circulation of 2,000.

Garrison published his abolitionist paper, The Liberator, each week from 1831 to 1865, attaining a circulation of 2,500 subscribers. "No compromise with Slavery!" he said. "Liberty for all, and freedom for the slaves!"

Wayland founded Appeal to Reason, a socialist weekly population in Girard, Kansas (pop. 2,500), which built a paid subscription base of 760,000. Appeal to Reason condemned capitalism, demanded public ownership of the means of production and supported Eugene V. Debs for president.

"If we could get a socialist paper every week into the hands of every voter in the United States, we could capture the government," Wayland wrote. He published from 1895 to 1922.

Sanger established Working Woman Rebel in 1944, was arrested, took off abroad, returned to the United States, and founded Birth Control Review. "No gods, no masters," Sanger proclaimed. "The aim of this journal will be to stimulate working women to think for themselves."

In 1933, Day established the Catholic Worker, a monthly concerned with the poor and powerless, centerpiece of a movement which opened 100 "houses of hospitality" for the homeless in dozens of American cities. Day's anti-war and anti-nuclear agitators were legendary. The Catholic Worker, with a circulation of more than 60,000, continues to be sold for one cent.

Which brings up the painful, difficult question of contemporary dissent press. With the prospect of endless war, a militarized America in which dissent is hard to sustain and politics in absoluta, what are the objectives of the dissident press to be? How might it reach its potential readership?

Today's dissenting journalists seem to struggle with more universal issues — U.S. military domination, corporate globalization, media mega-monopolies, climate change. These days, it is more difficult to get a social movement going; populations are more passive, uncertain. The political terrain is narrower.

Streitmatter's volume offers guidance as the American mavericks of yesteryear speak directly to their counterparts in the present. And that ain't bad.

TV show to revile in death and misfortune

Coming up with new ways to drive down the intelligence quotient of Americans is a full-time job for ABC. The network recently approved a new game show in which the relatives of a wealthy benefactor are pitted against each other to win the fortune once he or she dies. Rich people eager to destroy their family's fortunes are to be found in "The Will," created by the same producer who gave us "Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?"

CBS snubs independent filmmakers

The Public Broadcast System (PBS) has been refusing to air films or documentaries made by independent filmmakers according to a publication called Media File.

PBS gatekeepers have turned awaycountless independent filmmakers with the explanation that their work is too controversial, it comes from the wrong sources, or their production quality does not meet PBS standards. Among the rejected were: Deadly Deception, an expose of radiation poisoning of workers and residents by General Electric nuclear weapons production that won the 1991 I.A.C. Academy Best Documentary Short; The Money Lenders, a film about the impact of the World Bank and the IMF on developing countries; and Danny Schechter's Fatu: Gong film, Gongs Challenge to China.

Ask and ye shall receive

When MTV refused last month to play a Public Enemy video that mentioned the names of imprisoned civil rights activists Mumia Abu-Jamal and Jamil Al-Amin (the former H. Rap Brown), the Free Mumia Coalition vowed to protest the network's censorship and preference for negative racial stereotyping. But after MTV got wind that people were beginning to play the video, and according to organizers, were so apologetic that they are now giving away free audio CD-ROMs of the song to anyone who asks.

NPR devours community radio stations

Community voices are being drowned out by National Public Radio (NPR) affiliates who are devouring locally produced community and university stations nationwide, according to media watchdog Fairness and Accuracy In Reporting (FAIR). Through what are called "local management agreements," community and college radio stations in California, Milwaukee and Chicago have been bought off cheaply to NPR affiliates allegedly in exchange for their ability to increase revenue for schools and universities.
Gl Joe goes digital

BY SARAH STUTTIVE

You experience the nervous breath of a soldier as he jostles the trigger of his rifle. He tenses as an anonymous figure darts across the road — a button pushed, a trigger pulled, and the shadow crumples in the dusk.

You are playing America’s Army, a video game designed and created to train United States military to help with recruitment. With 24 million plays since its June debut, America’s Army is introducing a new generation of children to the adventure of a camouflage lifestyle where honor is earned guilt-free by racking up virtual “killed” and slaying America’s enemies.

The game’s high-tech graphics and snarling sound track — biding the whir of chopper propellers and radioed instructions — have made America’s Army one of this year’s most popular computer games. In this “T for Teen”-rated video game, players experience virtual现实生活 on reconnaissance missions in Afghanistan’s Tora Bora caves and hone their skills in sniper training.

Just coincidentally, young players can also access the Army’s official recruitment website through a button on the screen, which urges them to “... earn the right to call yourself a soldier....” The U.S. Army isn’t the only one to cash in on making entertainment out of military realities. America’s Army is part of this new genre of war games which seeks to both entertain and place its participants in the shoes of military heroes.

Under Ash. Set in current-day Israel the protagonist of Under Ash is not a heavily armed soldier with full artillery available, but a 19-year-old named Ahmad. The website includes Ahmad’s story, that of a hero “born during the Israeli invasion of South Lebanon... he belongs to Jerusalem.” He is devoted to the Palestinian resistance. In the scenes available Ahmad is depicted throwing stones and firing machine guns at Israeli tanks, as well as praying at the Dome of the Rock mosque in Jerusalem and being imprisoned in an Israeli jail.

Under Ash has received a flurry of attention and elicited controversy. Some have hailed it to be what it claims on the game’s website — “a call to justice,” and “a new form of history book... letting others understand what’s happening in Palestine.” Others, such as Middle East Realities, have denounced it as “disguising propaganda.”

Whether political elements are co-opting popular culture media to disseminate their views and market their interest, or popular culture is using its own tools to express and examine the growing unrest in the world, video games are transforming the violence of current international conflicts into another form of entertainment.
Ecuador confronts FTAA

BY PORTLAND IMC

Tonight I watched some of the most oppressed people in this world confront some of the most influential. I watched a group of poor farmers, indigenous people and workers speak, shout, and sing the truth to power.

When the day started, I was 20 km. south of Quito, with maybe 300 indigenous, one of two protest caravans that had crossed the country spreading the word about the protest against the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) summit in Quito.

Soon after we got off the buses and began a 15 km trek to Quito, the number of people seemed to mysteriously increase, as buses from the South caught up with us and unloaded fresh groups of protesters.

The procession was a riot of color, filled with red and blue ponchos and hundreds of rainbow flags (the symbol of the Andean indigenous and campesino movements). People lined the streets to watch. One shopkeeper said to me that the indigenous people were like burros, dragging along the rest of the country, who were also opposed to the FTAA because it would devastate the Ecuadorian economy, but who let the indigenous movement carry the torch.

When we finally reached our destination in Quito, we rounded the corner and found not 80 but between 2,000 and 6,000 people waiting. Our group didn’t even pause, but continued straight toward the Marriott Hotel, where the 34 trade ministers from North and South America were arriving to negotiate a treaty that promises to wipe out small farmers, to hand corporations a sweeping new set of tools to evade environmental, consumer and labor laws. The treaty would force the privatization of water, health care, and education. We were joined by large groups of campesinos, students, trade unionists and international activists who had already been fighting battles with the police. The march was led by a line of campesino and indigenous leaders (dirigentes), walking arm-in-arm, preceded by a Shaman conducting rites to improve the success of our efforts. Soon we were stopped by several hundred riot police.

More groups drifted in from the sides, and the Avenida Aéronautas, one of Quito’s widest streets, was packed for ten blocks. There must have been between 8,000 and 15,000 people.

As they approached the Avenida Amazonas, the police fired tear gas. They shot at and over crowd, so that as people ran away, they ran into more gas. I walked until I couldn’t see or breathe, then began to run, then someone grabbed my hand and led me away.

People retreated to regroup, and I found my way to the communications center to try to get the word out about the success of the mobilization — and its repression.

Later on, in an auditorium at the Suissotel, 25 or so ministers were on the stage. Peter Rosset of Food First stood up, his arm in a rainbow colored sling thanks to a protest injury. Rosset yelled to Bob Zoellick, the U.S. Trade Representative, that he should be ashamed for pushing an agreement that would impoverish Latin Americans, not to mention many U.S. citizens. Zoellick stared fixedly at his shoe.

The civil society presentations began. A line of people fanned out in front of the ministers (and TV cameras) holding signs that said “Sí a la vida, No al ALCA” (Yes to life, No to the FTAA).

The first speakers were representatives of an international meeting of parliament and congress members. They condemned the FTAA process, and called for an alternative integration, one that respects the needs and particular situations of the peoples of each country.

Finally, the social movement representatives spoke. Leonidas Iza, the President of CONAIE (the Ecuadorian indigenous federation), stated the social movements’ rejection of the FTAA and of neoliberalism in general. “We are in desperate shape,” he told the ministers. “You couldn’t possibly understand, you who were born in golden cradles, how we are hungry and tired and things have to change.”

There were cheers. The meeting ended, and the moderator hurriedly announced that the ministers were leaving and we could please sit down so they could leave. “NO!” screamed the civil society folks, and pushed out the door, leaving the ministers sitting on stage.

At that moment, I felt something shift. I realized that (unless the media bury this) the FTAA has in 24 hours gone from something whose praises its proponents sing to something they have to defend.

Like the World Trade Organization and the International Monetary Fund, the FTAA is becoming more difficult to sustain. The FTAA has become the agreement that is the death knell for the the social movements’ rejection of the FTAA and of neoliberalism in general. We are in desperate shape,” he told the ministers. “You couldn’t possibly understand, you who were born in golden cradles, how we are hungry and tired and things have to change.”

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Like the World Trade Organization before it, the FTAA has become the treaty that has to be sold to a continent that doesn’t want it.
UNITED NATIONS (1945-2002)

By Donand Paneth

UNITED NATIONS, N.Y.—Peace is too abstract a concept to be achievable. But war, the application of power, air bombardment, the massing of troops, assault and occupation, the corruption of purpose and principle, is sufficiently concrete to be carried out globally. History, the long centuries of war and peace, is ignored. Fascism is presented rationally — and rationalized legislatively, judicially.

The practitioners of national politics and international diplomacy manipulate and control the rule of force. The general population is propagandized and robotized out of its mind.

And the U.N., the world body founded at the end of World War II “to maintain international peace and security,” — what is one to say of it? It is a failure, a washout, a catastrophe.

With the U.N. Security Council’s 15-0 adoption on Nov. 8 of a United States-United Kingdom resolution on Iraq and weapons of mass destruction, the U.N. eclipsed itself as a world body. It became an organization representing North America, Europe, Australia, New Zealand, and Japan, overlapping in large part with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

It endorsed war as policy. It abandoned its purposes as set out in the U.N. Charter “to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war … to establish conditions under which justice and respect for … treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained … to promote social progress and better standards of living ….” The U.S. has more weapons of mass destruction than any other nation on earth, and has declared its readiness to use them (even against nations which don’t possess them), and deploy them in violation of treaties to which it is a party.

The U.N. has not challenged U.S. possession of weapons of mass destruction. Nor has any nation challenged British, French or Israeli possession of weapons of mass destruction.

But the U.N. voted to prepare the way for a possible U.S. attack on Iraq, returning U.N. weapons inspectors to Iraq under a stringent protocol with a strict timetable. Iraq is a small, recalcitrant Middle East country with huge oil supplies and reserves. Will an attack on its “ter- ritorial integrity or political independence,” ostensibly prohibited under article 2 of the U.N. Charter, be forthcoming?

Peace protesters and anti-corporate globalization demonstrators at rallies across the U.S. and Europe fear that it is likely.

Meanwhile, George W. Bush publicizes his administration’s war plans, the movement of troops, material and aircraft carriers to the region.

No American figure of authority speaks out against those preparations. No government official resigns in protest. American institutions, except for a small segment of the press, are complicit.

U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan himself goes along with the U.S., dutifully travelling between U.N. headquarters and the White House to receive his instructions. So does Hans Blix, chief U.N. weapons inspector.

In a statement following adoption of the Security Council resolution, Annan said: “This resolution is based on law, collective effort, and the unique legitimacy of the United Nations. It represents an example of multilateral diplomacy serving the cause of peace and security.” It is a replay and an extension of the history of the 1930’s when the theme was not peace but a sword, and the League of Nations collapsed. China, Spain, Ethiopia, and Czechoslovakia were the undefended victims of the failures of the League and the West.

Today, the U.S., U.K., and France take up the roles formerly played by Germany, Italy, and Japan — militaristic, imperialistic and threatening.

The U.N. was a good idea. But it was set up for failure from the start. The Security Council veto, held by its five permanent members, has hampered its functioning. The violent rivalry between the West and the Soviet Union knocked it off course.

Most particularly, and not generally recognized, the structures of peace articulated in the U.N. Charter were never brought into existence. Article 43 provides that “All members of the United Nations … undertake to make available to the Security Council … armed forces, assistance, and facilities … for the purpose of maintaining international peace and security.”

Those forces, which would have permitted the U.N. to act independently, were never made available.

Article 46 stipulates: “Plans for the application of armed force shall be made by the … Council with the assistance of the Military Staff Committee.” The Committee, consisting of high-ranking officers from each of the Council’s members, was established, but has never become operational. While it does meet once a week, it usually convenes and within a few minutes, adjourns. It does nothing.

An ad hoc arrangement came into being in 1956 with the first of many U.N. peacekeeping missions to which nations contributed military units. Over the years the suc- cess of peacekeeping missions has varied.

With the U.N. now subdued and subservient, the people of the world face a fundamental crisis.

By Lutful Sanju

UNITED NATIONS, N.Y.—Food emergencies are endangering the lives of 47 million people in several parts of the world, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and World Food Program (WFP) have announced.

In the Horn of Africa, 12 million people are threatened with starvation over the next several months. In Ethiopia, drought has caused a widespread loss of maize and sorghum crops, the staple foods for most of Ethiopia’s rural population. Malnutrition rates have reached alarming levels. Eritrea faces a similar situation, with drought causing an almost complete loss of the country’s cereal harvest.

Drought is the primary cause of hunger in southern Africa, where an estimated 14.4 million people are in danger of starvation, WFP said. People in six countries — Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe — require food assistance. Malnutrition is very high in the region and life expectancy is low. Life expectancy in the region ranges between 39 (for males in Mozambique) and 48 (for females in Lesotho).

In Central America, a “drought corridor” has affected 8.6 million people. The drought corridor is an area that exposes the rural areas of Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and El Salvador to recurring natural disasters. “These recurring droughts, and other natural dis- asters, leave poor families with no crops to feed them- selves,” said Zoraida Mesa, regional director of the WFP. “After years of natural disasters in Central America, many of these families have nothing left to sell, nothing left to cultivate, and nothing left to eat.

Many are going hungry.”

In Afghanistan, 7.5 million people continue to be dependent on humanitarian aid for survival. National authorities, specialized agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are attempting to rebuild the country, where millions have been unable to raise crops due to conflict and drought. “The task facing us after decades of war and desolation is immense,” an FAO expert said.

North Korea continues to experience food shortages. Inadequate funding of WFP programs has led to the suspension of food aid to 3 million women, children and elderly persons. An additional 1.5 million people will be cut off from assistance unless new pledges to the WFP are made by January.

Progress in reducing world hunger has almost come to a halt, the FAO said in its annual report on world hunger. The report said that as a result of the lack of progress, hunger is killing millions of people, including six million children under the age of five each year.

According to FAO’s figures for 1998-2000, 840 million people are undernourished, 799 million in developing countries. The report also found that more than 2 billion other people suffer from micronutrient mal- nutrition, where they lack the necessary nutrients the body needs. Most of the chronic hunger results from poverty.
“WE ONLY HAVE THE CHOICE TO DIE.”

GAZA RESIDENTS BRACE FOR MORE TERROR

By Kristin Ess

GAZA STRIP, Nov. 14 —

Today in Rafah an elderly woman sat in a chair in a narrow dirt alleyway, the same spot she sat in yesterday when she still had a house, uninhabitable though it was from the stench of flooding sewage. In one day, her eyes have gone from bright to dull. She is now both stateless and homeless. Israeli tanks rumbled through her house yesterday, along with those of over 100 Palestinians. The woman next door holds my hands, kissing my cheeks. She is imploring me to do something to save her daughter, who was shot by Israeli soldiers from shooting at her, to stop the sewage from seeping through the crevices in her cement block house.

As we wade through the floor, she is crying as she leads me through the broken glass. She points to the tanks and bulldozers just outside her window, and holds her hands up to the sky. The streets are full of flies. The 8-meter-high security wall Israel is building out of dirty reddened steel is getting longer everyday. Israeli soldiers targeted a 2-year-old boy yesterday. Even they could not come up with an excuse for shooting him in the head.

Before this is a reminder to everyone here that they are never safe. In violation of international law, Israel continues to practice collective punishment. The Gaza Strip, already like a prison because people cannot move in or out, is being used as a dumping ground for the family members of “wanted” Palestinians. Many are saying that as soon as Israel banishes all Palestinians to Gaza, it will simply bomb the Strip out of existence.

In Rafah this morning, a family was eating its Ramadan breakfast in the one room remaining in its destroyed house. The house had already been partially bulldozed days before, but there was nowhere else for the family to go.

An Israeli tank passed by, firing inside. The mother and father grabbed their children and began to run. The father, carrying two of the children, escaped. The mother holding her 3-year-old son, was shot as she tried to run away from the Israeli tank fire. She was taken to the hospital. The father found their three-year-old son with a 50mm shell in his chest. A friend who has two young children, one and another on the way phones me and says, “This is a small body, a 3-year-old’s body. This bullet is big; it’s for walls, or to fight tank to tank, not for children.”

I ask him, “What can any one do to defend themselves, to resist?” He tells me, “We have the chance to die. This is the reality. We can’t escape from this.”

Later, I’m watching satellite news. A hundred tanks are plowing through Nablus, a West Bank city still under curfew. On Al Jazeera, I see a boy in a t-shirt and jeans running behind one of the tanks, trying to insert a Palestinian flag.

SELLING KETCHUP, SELLING WAR

continued from cover

a-half months, Heinz reports it sold 2.5 million bottles of the purple ketchup.

Selling a war is obviously different than selling a kid-oriented food product. But like Heinz, war marketers use focus groups and survey research to develop their message and identify their target audience. They also supplement their press releases, follow-up phone calls and video footage with willing third-party advocates ready to deliver their spin.

Front groups, witnesses and experts all can act as seemingly independent advocates. In the case of Iraq, the State Department is providing media training to Iraqi dissidents to “help make the Bush administration’s argument for the removal of Saddam Hussein,” PR Week reports. The public relations effort is being taken up by a group with ties to the Israel lobby and Vice-President Dick Cheney. The Committee for the Liberation of Iraq (CLI) is a “independent entity” that is expected to “work closely with the administration,” reports the Nov. 4 Washington Post.

The Committee is far from independent, however. Inter Press Service News’ Jim Lobe reports, “The Committee appears to be a spin-off of the Project for a New American Century (PNAC), a group consisting mainly of neo-conservative Jews and heavy-hitters from the Christian Right.” Lobe also notes that the Committee’s chair, Bruce P. Jackson, is a vice president at the mammoth weapons maker Lockheed Martin.

Other members include New School President and former U.S. Sen. Bob Kerrey, former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich, labor leader James Hoffa Jr., former Secretary of State George Schultz and Senators John McCain and Joseph Lieberman.

The Committee will sponsor “a series of upcoming briefings on foreign policy groups, Iraqi specialists and other opinion makers” to build “fresh public support for U.S. policy.” The Bush administration’s goal is to get their message covered by as many media outlets as possible without debate or dissent.

News Feeds

Among the major media, there is less and less time for reporters to investigate stories and ever more content to provide to the “all news, all the time” cable networks and internet news sites. Journalists are outnumbered by better-paid PR people, many of whom are former journalists.

There is little research on how much “news” originates as press releases. Academics conservatively estimate it is 40 percent, but it is probably much more.


“They are able to tailor their publicity so [a] journalist will listen and cover it. As a result much of the news you read in newspapers and magazines or watch on television and hear on the radio is heavily influenced by public relations people.”

Unfortunately “news” hatched by a PR person and journalist working together looks much like real news dug up by enterprising journalists working independently.

In the nearly two decades since the Blyskal’s book, things have only gotten easier for PR people. Press releases, video news releases and “experts” are spoon-fed to overworked journalists by PR firms.

On any night the evening news is almost certainly broadcasting industry-provided footage. If it could be a video of children enjoying purple ketchup, a cancer patient receiving a new treatment, or Iraqi dissidents denouncing Saddam Hussein. Regardless, the footage is used as if it was gathered by station cameramen, its origins are not noted. Public relations has no use for open discourse or democratic decision-making. Public relations, in its invisible way, is about managing opinion — from food-buying decisions to foreign policy actions. Kids get purple ketchup. We all get war.
Since January 1993, almost 300 young women have been murdered in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, and more than 500 others are missing and feared dead. From the evidence, most of the victims were kidnapped, raped, tortured and brutally mutilated before being murdered. An unusually high percentage of them worked in the foreign-owned factories, known as maquiladoras, in the ever-expanding shantytowns surrounding the city. Two more bodies were found in October 2002.

HOW TO HELP?

- Sign the petition: End Violence Against Women in Juárez. 
  http://www.PetitionOnline.com/JUAREZ/petition.html
- To get more information visit 
  http://www.geocities.com/pornuestrashijas/
  In this site you can find a sample letter and the address to send it to Human Rights organizations, president Vincent Fox and president George W. Bush.
- Support grass-roots organizations that are working towards resolving these murders: 
  “Nuestras Hijas de Regreso a Casa, A.C.”
  EU Bank of America account: 004794 215165
  Latin American Federation of Families of the Disappeared (fedeleamorg@cantv.net)
  Crisis Center Casa Amiga http://www.casa-amiga.org

In March 2002, a demonstration organized by Ni Una Más demanded justice for the killed and missing women of the state of Chihuahua, where Ciudad Juárez is located. A cross with 268 nails, each representing a victim, was transported through the city and placed at Paseo del Norte, a bridge at the border of the United States and Mexico.

En Ciudad Juárez hay 1.3 millones de habitantes. Más que 15% de esta población trabaja en las casi 400 maquiladoras del área.

1.3 million people live in Ciudad Juárez. More than 200,000 residents work in the nearly 400 maquiladoras in the area.

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En marzo del 2002, Ni Una Más organizó una demostración para pedir justicia por las mujeres asesinadas y desaparecidas en el estado de Chihuahua. Una cruz con 268 clavos, cada uno en memoria de una mujer, fue transportada a través de la ciudad y colocada en el Paseo del Norte, un puente en la frontera entre Estados Unidos y México.
The police have occasionally hauled in suspects, but critics say they are just looking to pin the crime on a scapegoat to make the issue disappear. Meanwhile, the murders have continued unabated. In November 2001, for example, police arrested two men for the murder of five of eight women whose bodies were found in a cotton field. The police produced written confessions, but the two men maintained their statements were extracted under torture. DNA test results made public in October revealed the two men were not responsible for the crime.

Distrustful of the police, citizens of the city have organized their own ongoing searches for bodies of the victims.

La policía ha detenido varias personas en distintas ocasiones. Pero los detenidos son sólo chivos expiatorios. Un ejemplo es cuando en noviembre del 2001, se hallaron 8 cuerpos de mujeres en un campo de cotón en la ciudad. La policía identificó los cuerpos y detuvo a dos hombres, a quienes acusó de cinco de los asesinatos y obtuvo sus confesiones por escrito. Después de un año, en octubre del 2002, los resultados de las pruebas de DNA contradicen el informe policial, lo que implica que los dos sospechos dijeron la verdad al acusar a la policía de haberlos torturado para confesar crímenes que no habían cometido.

Debido a la desconfianza generalizada frente a las investigaciones policiales, los ciudadanos de Juárez se organizan ellos mismos para buscar los cuerpos.

PARA AYUDAR

- Informese más en: http://www.geocities.com/paranuestraes/nanas/En este sitio encontrará una carta modelo y direcciones para enviarla a organizaciones pro-derechos humanos y a los presidentes Vicent Fox y George Bush.
- Envíe ayuda a organizaciones populares que intentan resolver este problema.
  “Nuestras Hijas de Regreso a Casa, A.C.”
  EU Bank of America account: 004794 215165
  Federación de Latinoamericanas de Asociaciones de Familias de Detenidos Desaparecidos (Fedefamorg@cantv.net)
  Casa Amiga Centro de Crisis http://www.casa-amiga.org
Para entender el incalculable daño que el lucrativo negocio de la comunicación ha hecho a las libertades civiles y a la mal denominada democracia de este país, hace falta primero tener bien claro que hoy en día, más que en ningún otro momento de la historia de la humanidad, información significa poder y luego, tratar de averiguar, en el tabernáculo mundo de los ‘share holders’, quién o quienes manejan los medios de comunicación de este país.

**EL CARTEL DE LA COMUNICACIÓN**

Las mayores cadenas de TV y periódicos de este país son propiedad y/o están controlados por las mayores corporaciones, quienes sienten que los medios, disfrazados de lobbying, están íntimamente ligados a la Casa Blanca. Básicamente, la comunicación de este país (y de otros muchos) la manejan seis corporaciones: Time Warner, Disney, Viacom, News Corporation y Sony se reparten el pastel de la industria de la comunicación.

News Corporation, además de cuentos de emisoras de radio y diarios, controla cuatro big ones de la Casa Blanca (Time Warner y AOL controlan entre otros medios, CNN (vampiro instigador de la devastadora guerra del Golfo), Disney es dueño y señor de ABC y Miramax. Mientras que otras “pequeñas corporaciones”, como General Electric, organiza el despacho de noticias de NBC.

Los tentáculos de estas corporaciones abarcan editoriales, compañías de dibujos animados, parques de entretenimiento, video clubs, revistas, estudios de Hollywood, obras de Broadway e incluso equipos de baloncesto, hockey, etc. Según críticos como Robert McChesney, en los estándares de la “nueva ética profesional” habría que añadir un undécimo mandamiento: No cubrirás noticias polémicas sobre corporaciones y/o bilionarios.

**CLUB MEDIA PARA RICOS**

El 17% de la lista de Forbes de las 400 personas más ricas de US, obtienen sus ganancias de los medios de comunicación. Se trata de una mafia que controla la información de este país con ganancias anuales equiparables a las del producto interior bruto de pequeños países. El periodismo independiente y crítico se ha convertido en un asunto de patriotismo. Tanto que varias cadenas de televisión adoptaron la bandera americana como otro logo más de la corporación. Durante los meses posteriores a 9/11, ni un solo medio se atrevió a ofrecer un análisis serio sobre lo que estaba sucediendo en el mundo.

Con lo cual la información real fue distorsionada hasta la saciedad, convirtiéndose en propaganda. (Propaganda que bien utilizada durante más de un año, ha garantizado la popularidad de Bush, el auge del partido republicano y un más que probable bombardeo de Irak).

Ni un solo medio se ha ocupado, por ejemplo, de indagar en las relaciones político-económicas del clan Bin Ladén y el clan Bush. Ni un solo medio, tampoco, denunció la denominación de “enemigo combatiente” que el oráculo Ashcroft se sacó de la manga para designar a los detenidos en Guantánamo. Una vez que fueron detenidos, no como soldados (porque entonces sí tendrían que haber seguido las disposiciones de la Convención de Ginebra), sino como criminales (ya que entonces habrían tenido derecho a cierta protección legal), sino que se les negaron el debido proceso. En otras palabras, no fue un caso hasta donde se diseccionan las causas, que tuvieron como consecuencia el ataque del WTC.

Criticó a Ramonet (director de Le Monde Diplomatique), unas declaraciones que Ramonet desmintió en cuanto a haberle atribuido a Ignacio Ramonet (director del periódico Del Nuevo Mundo). Había una guerra, una guerra que invadió el país en octubre de 2001, el 11 de septiembre. La autocensura informativa se convirtió en un asunto de patriotismo. Tanto que varias cadenas de televisión adoptaron la bandera americana como otro logo más de la corporación. Durante los meses posteriores a 9/11, ni un solo medio se atrevo a ofrecer un análisis serio donde se discuten las causas, que tuvieron como consecuencia el ataque del WTC.

Criticó a Chomsky (el que invadió el país en octubre de 2001), el 11 de septiembre. La autocensura informativa se convirtió en un asunto de patriotismo. Tanto que varias cadenas de televisión adoptaron la bandera americana como otro logo más de la corporación. Durante los meses posteriores a 9/11, ni un solo medio se atrevo a ofrecer un análisis serio donde se discuten las causas, que tuvieron como consecuencia el ataque del WTC.

**NOTICIAS PATRIÓTICAS**

Dicho lo anterior, no debería ser una sorpresa la ola de noticias que invadieron el país en octubre de 2001, el 11 de septiembre. La autocensura informativa se convirtió en un asunto de patriotismo. Tanto que varias cadenas de televisión adoptaron la bandera americana como otro logo más de la corporación. Durante los meses posteriores a 9/11, ni un solo medio se atrevo a ofrecer un análisis serio donde se discuten las causas, que tuvieron como consecuencia el ataque del WTC.

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Durante el apogeo del modelo neoliberal en América Latina, en los ochenta y noventa, los candidatos presidenciales enmarcaban sus programas económicos en el contexto de la globalización y siguiendo al pie de la letra los lineamientos del FMI y del Banco Mundial. Con el fracaso estrepitoso del modelo neoliberal en América Latina, los votos se han desplazado hacia candidatos los lineamientos del FMI y del Banco Mundial. Con el fracaso estrepitoso del modelo neoliberal en América Latina, los votos se han desplazado hacia candidatos.

Entre estas figuras, otrora sin posibilidades, hoy con tremendo apoyo popular, se destaca Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, el primer obrero presidencial de Brasil. Lula tiene una larga historia como líder metatlárgico y como dirigente del Partido de los Trabajadores (PT), una coalición de grupos del movimiento obrero, y de sectores de izquierda y del cristianismo progresista. En sus primeras declaraciones como presidente electo dijo “los mercados financieros deben entender que todos los brasileños tienen que comer”, y agregó que esa iba a ser una de las prioridades del gobierno. Además, en tono de advertencia, dijo que en las tratativas de comercio internacional era fundamental que las naciones ricas eliminaran las barreras proteccionistas y las subvenciones a los productores locales de esos países porque esas medidas están destruyendo las exportaciones brasileñas.

Brasil es el país más extenso, más poblado y económicamente más importante de América Latina. Es además la economía número once del mundo, y la cuarta nación con la distribución más injusta de la riqueza. Con más de 170 millones de habitantes, casi un tercio (54 millones) vive en la pobreza. El 10 por ciento de los más ricos recibe el 48 por ciento del ingreso total del país.

El crecimiento desigual de las regiones es marcado: el ingreso per cápita en la región industrializada de Sao Paulo es diez veces superior al de la región del Nordeste. El 48 por ciento del ingreso total del país vive en la pobreza. El 10 por ciento de los más ricos recibe el 48 por ciento del ingreso total del país.

Brasil tiene una deuda externa de 250 mil millones de dólares. Este año Brasil debe pagar treinta y dos mil millones de dólares de vencimientos y está al día con las cuotas. En los próximos cuatro años, Brasil deberá pagar sumas igualmente exorbitantes. Esto es lo que los organismos financieros y la banca mundial esperan y exigirán de Brasil. Para concretar el plan que lo llevó a la presidencia, “Cero Hambre”, Lula deberá enfrentarse a los mercados financieros, ya que las reivindicaciones y los cambios exigidos por el movimiento social y los desposeídos del país no podrán realizarse en el contexto actual del modelo neoliberal impuesto por el FMI.

Para poder enfrentarse desde una posición de poder real a los organismos financieros internacionales, Brasil debe revitalizar la integración económica regional con Argentina, Uruguay y demás países del MERCOSUR y de la Comunidad Andina. Además, es fundamental la cooperación económica regional con los gobiernos de Venezuela, Cuba y otros gobiernos que defienden la soberanía nacional de sus países y se oponen al Plan ALCA impulsado desde Estados Unidos para destruir las economías regionales subordinadas bajo su control.

A esas alianzas internacionales, con las fuerzas que se oponen a la globalización y al modelo neoliberal, a nivel nacional habrá que acompañarlas con el fortalecimiento de la coalición de fuerzas progresistas, desde el Movimiento Sin Tierra [ver recuadro] y su propuesta de reforma agraria hasta los sectores medios que reclaman un plan nacional de seguridad social.

Si el PT y Lula logran consolidar esas alianzas y movilizar al pueblo tras un plan de cambio social, conseguirán en el corto plazo, la moratoria de la deuda externa o, al menos, una renegociación más ventajosa. Estas son las condiciones indispensables para iniciar un proceso de independencia económica y justicia social.

Como dice Frei Betto, el legendaro filósofo de la teología de la liberación, autor y periodista brasileño: “Los brasileños eligieron a Lula presidente de la República. Su gobierno no nos dará un paraíso, pero sí un paraíso, pero sí un paraíso. Dejemos que nos juntamos en una gran unión nacional al menos podremos quedarte libre de vientros del hambre, del desempleo y del analfabetismo.”
THE INDIEMEDIA NETWORK:

Indymedia is a collective of independent media organizations and hundreds of journalists offering grassroots, non-corporate coverage. Indymedia is a democratic media outlet for the creation of radical, accurate, and passionate telling of truth.