As New York City and the state wrestle over how to bridge a yawning budget chasm, more and more New Yorkers are asking, “Will the Gucci set pay its fair share?”

Teresa Theopano, who works full-time while attending the Hunter College School of Social Work, says the budget crisis is “unacceptable.” Her solution is “Tax the people who can afford it. Not the poor people.”

Marilyn Garfin, a laugh therapist who lives in Chelsea, says, “I’m a pissed-off New Yorker right now. There’s no middle class anymore. Just the rich and everyone else.”

In assigning blame for the budget crisis, most politicians and pundits point to the one-two punch of recession and September 11. These certainly had a profound effect, but there is a more fundamental reason. As the stock market exploded during the 1990s and government coffers overflowed, huge tax breaks were lavished on the wealthy – the same ones reaping massive returns from Wall Street investments.

Once the investments bubble popped, the revenue streams ran dry. And now, the Republican governor and mayor want working New Yorkers to shoulder the dual burden of tax increases and service cuts.

The state legislature is proposing various remedies to close a $12 billion deficit (depending on who’s counting): increasing the Personal Income Tax on those earning more than $100,000 a year; raising the sales tax by a quarter point; closing some corporate loopholes; raiding the state’s tobacco settlement fund for billions of dollars; and cutting hundreds of millions in expenditures, mainly education and social services.

Progressives say it’s a victory if the rich give back some of the tens of billions of dollars bestowed upon them by Gov. George Pataki. But they call the sales tax increase “regressive” and “despicable.”

Pataki’s original proposals were much more severe. He wanted to slash healthcare and education spending by $3 billion. Pataki says he’ll veto any tax increases, but earlier called for a massive 1.25 percent increase in the sales tax.

“At present, it appears likely that both houses will have comfortable majorities for the override,” says the Working Families Party, “but the Governor is working hard to undermine support, particularly among Republican Senators.”

Even if Pataki’s position prevails that doesn’t mean average folks will be off the tax hook. The burden will shift instead to local governments, resulting in massive property tax increases to close shortfalls in local services and school budgets.

SOAKING THE POOR

In New York City, Mayor Michael Bloomberg put forth two plans to close a $3.8 billion gap. Last November when discussing the proposals, he intoned, “The pain of balancing the budget is going to be on everybody.”

The first plan depended on the city receiving $2.7 billion from the state. The second was labeled the “doomsday” budget, but it had a curious definition of “everybody.” It called for axing more than 10,000 city employees; closing 40 firehouses; abolishing subway and bus discounts for the elderly and disabled; eliminating after-school programs; and closing zoos, public pools, childhood health centers and recreation centers. Visibly absent were any suggestions that the wealthiest New Yorkers, such as the billionaire mayor, pay their fair share.

The roots of the budget debacle lie in “the very deep tax cuts at the city and state level” during the past decade, says Josh Mason, policy director for the Working Families Party. Mason explains that if the state’s tax structure...
NYC’S INDEPENDENT BOOKSTORES HOLD ON: AGAINST ALL ODDS

BY SASHA NEVSKAYA

It is not easy to be independent in New York City. Just as recent budget cuts are having a destructive effect on schools and libraries, climbing rents and big-box superstores like Barnes & Noble are continuing to challenge radical, community-minded booksellers.

Mayday Books and Infoshop was started in 2001. It continues the anarchist tradition of Blackout Books – closed in 1999 by a steep rent increase. Bluestockings, New York’s only feminist bookstore, was recently on the verge of going out of business. Soft Skull, an independent publisher since 1994, had to move its Manhattan store to Brooklyn to cut costs.

Located in the lobby of the Theatre for the New City, Mayday offers radical books, local newspapers and zines. The rent is set by the Theatre, which, though low by Manhattan standards, still takes almost half of Mayday’s monthly revenues. The rest of Mayday’s income is spent on buying more inventory, adding to the store’s lending library, and providing for a free section.

Mayday relies heavily on volunteer support. The bookstore is open 12-9 p.m. daily, which requires 21 shifts a week filled by 15 to 18 volunteers. Mayday holds weekly meetings in which the group decides on bookstore operation and spending. “This is in a way a project in collective organizing,” says Liam Malarsinovics, describing the advantages of Mayday’s functioning.

The struggle lies in attracting volunteers that way. “We have had about one hundred people come through here in the past two years,” says Seth Weiss. Bluestockings bookstore and café is a somewhat different venture. Popular among the City’s feminists, liberals and academics, as well as modestly profitable, Bluestockings was in peril this March when owner Kathryn Welsh decided to withdraw from the cooperative initiative.

Brooke Lehman and Hitomi Matarese pooled their resources and called for volunteers to renovate the store. Bluestockings reopened two weeks ago. With no management experience but with Lehman’s history of activist organizing and Matarese’s artistic background, the co-owners are hoping to raise enough money within six months to turn Bluestockings into a non-profit operation. The bookstore hosts several meetings of local activist groups, schedules a variety of readings, and a weekly Poetry Jam. Lehman and Matarese are not planning to stray from feminism, but to add to the bookstores already established purposes. “This is not a store exclusively for women, but rather a place for people with a feminist perspective,” says Lehman. The owners hope Bluestockings becomes a center for community gatherings and popular education. They are planning to set up computer workstations and after-school programs for children.

Soft Skull’s bookstore serves as a “publisher event space” for readings, says manager Thomas Hopkins. Soft Skull is looking to make the store a cooperative venture with other independent publishers and journals. As a press, Soft Skull is growing, publishing 13 books in 2001 and 30 this year. It plans to publish 50 in 2004. Soft Skull receives thousands of unsolicited submissions as well as agent submissions, some rejected by big publishers. “We get manuscripts from top New York agencies,” says Richard Nash. Half of the nonfiction published by Soft Skull comes from unsolicited submissions. Fiction publications are about three-quarters agent-submitted. Soft Skull doesn’t provide the authors with snapping photos in big magazines. However, it does emphasize good writing and unusual topics.

Mayday Books and Infoshop is located at 151 1st Avenue between 9th and 10th Streets. Bluestockings is at 172 Allen St. between Stanton and Orchard. Soft Skull is located at 71 Bond St. in downtown Brooklyn.
By Rob Goodier

Elizabeth Detention Center in New Jersey is a former one-story warehouse, devoid of windows, open to the sky. Its commonplace outward appearance belies the presence of 270 men and women imprisoned inside.

The majority are asylum seekers who entered the United States hoping for protection from oppressive governments, war, torture or death. Many lived inside for more than two months and counted himself lucky to be held to the public and not accountable to any other through metal grates in glass partitions. We pressed our ears up to the stainless steel circle to hear a young man speak. It was more personal; we had to be closer and could smell his breath.

“Even though you’re prepared for it, it’s still a shocking experience to walk in there the first time,” said Sarah Terlouw, a volunteer x-ray machine. “You have to say, how to introduce oneself, start a conversation…”

The first prisoner Sarah met with did not speak English, and the woman felt isolated. She fled her country, fought for freedom, and they came here and were met by a prison cell and a jail guard — it’s un-American. These are the people who would build a democracy. These are people who were fighting Saddam Hussein, for example, long before President George W. Bush could find Iraq on a map.”

The Sojourners are a coalition of volunteers — from Riverside Church and Makor Jewish Cultural Center — who comfort detainees through their presence, letters, gifts and support.

Two of the volunteers expected to meet new prisoners; the other was visiting a Pakistani man he had met some weeks before.

We gained admission with our driver’s licenses, handing them to a uniformed guard behind a sliding glass window. We told her the room and bed numbers of the people we wanted to see. By the inmates’ accounts, up to 40 people sleep in a room on bunk beds. We passed through a metal detector and waited in front of a thick steel door. The door slowly peeled back, its machinery shuddering, and we entered a room that looked like an airport.

“That clanging door. That noise just sticks in your head,” Meaghan Tuohey-Kay, a lawyer for the detainee-advocacy group Interfaith Refugee Action Team — Elizabeth, told me later.

As the door closed behind us, another slid to the side, opening from the inside. Inside was a toothbrush and a metal tray filled with bars of soap.

John Vanier, another volunteer, has visited detainees since 1998. Last month he began to visit a newly detained man. “It can be a very rewarding experience to help people,” he said. “The second time I went to visit him, he didn’t pick up the phone right away, he just touched his hands to the glass.”

Previously, John would visit Mohamed I. Mubarak, an asylum seeker from Sri Lanka, for much of the four years he was detained. Mubarak was arrested at John F. Kennedy Airport en route to Vancouver. Rather than allow him to the United States it was detained in Sri Lanka, where he feared torture or death, he appealed the review board’s decisions. Each appeal that was filed and was not immediately unimpeded by the court, received attention every two to three months.

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from page 1

were still the same as in 1995, when Pataki assumed office, tax receipts would be $12 billion higher – the same as the current state deficit. And since 1994, says the WFP, the share of state revenue from corporate taxes has declined by more than one-third. During the go-go nineties, Mason says an “irresponsible political leadership” in Albany and New York City “used a temporary economic boom to push through permanent tax cuts.”

LIVE BY THE SWORD

The crisis has laid bare the city (and state’s) dilemma. New York is a company town, it lives and dies by Wall Street. The securities industry accounts for 5 percent of total employment in the Big Apple, but generates 19 percent of total wages and salaries. As a source of economic growth, Wall Street accounted for 56 percent of the increase in real earnings in the city from 1992-1997. It also contributed about half of the growth in the Gross State Product from 1992-1999. During the 1980s, when the state’s economy grew at a much faster rate, Wall Street contributed less than 8 percent of that growth.

A report issued by New York State Comptroller Carl McCall in 1998 underscored the “overwhelming centrality of Wall Street in the city’s resurgence.” During the 1990s, employment in the 6 economic sectors contributed to that decade’s economic boom. During the 1990s, however, manufacturing jobs dwindled while city bigwigs lavished money and attention on the financial industry.

The result was predictable. McCall concluded that Wall Street accounted for over half of all jobs created from 1993-1997, and from 1992-1998, it accounted for half of the $2.7 billion growth in four tax categories.

During the nineties, Mayor Giuliani pushed through tax cuts that mainly benefited the rich and cost the city $2.3 billion in revenues annually, according to Mike Wallace, author of A New Deal for New York. The giveaways included chopping the commercial rent tax, ending an income tax surcharge imposed during the last recession, and $2 billion in tax rebates for large corporations.

HIDDEN TAXES

At the state level, Mason says, “Two-thirds of the tax cuts went to the richest 20 percent of New Yorkers.”

Even without the tax cuts, the city and state would still be struggling with deficits, albeit smaller ones. The city closed last year’s budget gap by cutting $1.1 billion in services and jacking property taxes by 18.5 percent.

City residents appear as if they are going to pay for the property tax hike in the form of increased rents for regulated units. The Rent Guidelines Board has approved a tentative increase in two-year leases for regulated units. The Rent Guidelines Board for the property tax hike in the form of increased rents. The increase would amount to $4.2 billion in 2003. Instead, the money could pay the salaries of 55,618 elementary school teachers.

Firefighter job programs next fiscal year will burn through $864.2 million in taxpayer money from New York, alone. For the same amount the state could pay for 129,661 housing vouchers.

New York’s share of a 10-year $550 billion tax cut would total $8.9 billion in FY2004. The money could instead pay for health care for 2,914,913 children.

Almost every state is facing a budget crisis. Some are shortening the school year, cutting Medicare or just slashing programs across the board to close the shortfall. Many states are asking why the federal government can’t come to the rescue. After all, it’s found the bucks for trillion-dollar tax cuts, a huge increase in military spending and a $75 billion war on Iraq – an amount that would more than cover every state’s deficit.

The National Priorities Project, a group that examines the community impact of government taxing and spending policies, offers a tool on its web site that allows users to see in numbers the repercussions of federal budget programs on various programs in their home state.

• Tax cuts for the richest 1 percent of New Yorkers will amount to $4.2 billion in 2003. Instead, the money could pay the salaries of 55,618 elementary school teachers.

• Fighter jet programs next fiscal year will burn through $864.2 million in taxpayer money from New York, alone. For the same amount the state could pay for 129,661 housing vouchers.

• New York’s share of a 10-year $550 billion tax cut would total $8.9 billion in FY2004. The money could instead pay for health care for 2,914,913 children.

Tax revenues may seem to be in short supply, but not suggestions as to how to deal with the budget crisis. The question is who pays. Republicans in City Hall and the governor’s mansion are willing to impoverish the poor and working New Yorkers. Social justice advocates counter that the ultra-rich should part with a few of their baubles.

**BUDGET TRADE-OFFS**

**PROGRESSIVE INCOME TAX INCREASE.**

According to the State Department of Taxation and Finance, cuts in the Personal Income Tax (PIT) since 1999-2003 tax collections fall by $5.6 billion, and will reduce tax collections in FY 2004 by another $6.2 billion.

The legislature has approved a tentative increase, but it can do more. One proposal levies a .7 percent surcharge on incomes over $100,000, and an additional .7 percent surcharge on income over $200,000. Another proposal is for a 2 percent surcharge on income over $200,000.

**REVENUE RAISED: $2.8 BILLION — $3.4 BILLION IN THE FIRST YEAR.**

**STOCK TRANSFER TAX.**

Until 1981, stock trades in New York were taxed at a nickel per share, with a maximum of $350 for any given transaction. Restoring the tax at half the old rate would today raise $4 billion per year, which could be split evenly between city and state.

**REVENUE RAISED: $2 BILLION EACH FOR CITY AND STATE ANNually.**

**REPEAL THE ROCKEFELLER DRUG LAWS.**

By treating substance abuse as a public health issue rather than continuing to criminalize it, the state could release the 20,000 drug offenders currently incarcerated at a high cost.

**EXPENSES SAVED: UP TO $700 MILLION A YEAR.**

**EXPAND THE BOTTLE LAW.**

Bottling companies receive unclaimed bottle deposits to the tune of $120 million this year alone. The state could easily demand that the unclaimed deposits be returned to local governments. The bottle law could also be expanded to include all bottles, cans and non-carbonated drinks.

**REVENUE RAISED: UP TO $131 MILLION ANNUALLY FOR THE CITY.**

**TOLL THE EAST RIVER AND HARLEM RIVER BRIDGES.**

Transportation Alternatives suggests placing tolls on the 12 city-owned bridges between Manhattan and Brooklyn, Queen, and the Bronx. One option is one-way toll on cars entering Manhattan with a $7 toll on the four East River bridges and a $1.50 charge on the eight Harlem River bridges.

**REVENUE RAISED: $520 MILLION DURING FIRST FULL YEAR OF OPERATION.**

**CHARGE FOR FILM AND TELEVISION PERMITS.**

New York’s streets are an irresistible lure for Hollywood. On average there are more than 20,000 location-shooting “days” a year. Filmmakers are not charged for the permits the city provides (on top of being exempted from state and local taxes). One possibility is to charge $250 for a one-day permit, **REVENUE RAISED: $5 MILLION A YEAR.**

**STOP TRASH COLLECTION OF LAWN CLIPPINGS.**

The city pays for the collection and out-of-state dumping of an estimated 100,000 tons of grass clippings from residential yards. The average cost of the four outer borough’s garbage export contracts is $65 per ton.

**EXPENSES SAVED: $6.5 MILLION A YEAR.**

**ELIMINATE OPERATION CONDOR.**

City spending on police overtime has tripled since 1997, peaking at $332 million in 2002, excluding World Trade Center-related activity. This year’s budget includes $40 million for Operation Condor, the city’s notorious “quality-of-life” campaign. Total expenditures for the program in 2002 were $62 million.

**EXPENSES SAVED: $40 MILLION – $62 MILLION A YEAR.**

**STOP PAYING FOR WASHING-UP TIME FOR COPS.**

Currently, police officers work 242 tours a year. The last 35 minutes of an officer’s shift are reserved for debriefings, washing up and changing clothes. Many observers say that is excessive.

State law mandates that police work a minimum number of hours per year. Chopping 20 minutes off of a shift change would mean they could work 10 more tours a year. That means the city could maintain the same level of policing while eliminating $65 per ton.

**EXPENSES SAVED: ABOUT $70 MILLION A YEAR.**

**TAX LUXURY APARTMENT RENTALS.**

More than 74,000 apartments in the city fetch $2,000 a month or more. One proposal is to place a 1 percent tax on the owners of the buildings with these pricey units.

**REVENUE RAISED: $27 MILLION IN FIRST YEAR.**

For more information on budget options, go to the New York City Independent Budget Office website at www.ibo.nyc.gov.
ONE-ARMED BENNETT

BY STEVEN WISHNIA

It’s not nice to celebrate the misfortunes of others, but if Bennett deserves it. Bennett, federal drug czar during the Bush I administration, is the self-appointed moral arbiter of the nation and author of morality texts The Book of Virtues and The Death of Outrage. The Washington Monthly recently revealed that he is also a compulsive gambler, losing $340,000 at the slots in one day in Atlantic City last year and $500,000 in two days in Las Vegas last month.

We don’t have a problem with gambling. Lay off our pot-smoking, and we won’t care if you want to lay five units on the Jets minus-3 over Denver.

Ain’t nobody’s business but your own. But Bennett is the man behind some of the harshest and most fanatical drug policies in U.S. history, and such a self-righteous prick that we have to enjoy the sight of him getting hoisted by his own petard. There hasn’t been a scandal this tasty since fundamentalist preacher Jimmy Swaggart got caught with a cheap hooker in a seedy New Orleans motel.

Bennett’s drug policies are not ancient history. Current federal drug czar John Walters is his protégé, dubbed “Bennett’s Mini-Me” by the Drug Policy Alliance’s Ethan Nadelmann. Drug use is “morally high and its “expansive notion of ‘rights’” as the philosophical progenitor of the unholy, remorseless teenage “superpredators” spawned by ghetto welfare mothers.

Ironically, crack-trade violence peaked during Bush I’s term, when Bennett was drug czar and Walters his aide. Body Count largely ignored that fact. Instead, Bennett and Walters used the cheap debating trick that user is the problem, because “casual use is the vector by which drug use spreads.”

In other words, drug users who haven’t screwed up their lives should be punished because the example of a pot-smoking lawyer or basketball player will make people think marijuana isn’t so bad.

In his zeal to once again make the United States a moral nation, Bennett condemns a host of immoralities, from pot to promiscuity, homosexuality to hip-hop. In his view, Bill Clinton lying about an extramarital blowjob was a far viler abomination than Richard Nixon lying about bugging his opponents or Ronald Reagan lying about funding terrorists in Central America. But oddly, Bennett doesn’t speak against gambling. He denounces the sixties counterculture for promoting instant gratification instead of hard work, self-denial and thrift.

What captures the spirit of instant gratification better than pulling the lever of a slot machine or playing video poker?

Bennett claims that he more or less broke even and that he wasn’t blowing the “milk money.” But the millions he threw away show contempt for the working people of America. He lost more money in one day than most people can spend on a house. The $500 chips that he tossed into slot machines and lost a few seconds later represent almost three weeks of take-home pay for a woman deboning catfish in Mississippi, four or five 12-hour shifts behind the wheel for a New York taxi driver, a week’s worth of class time and lesson planning for a teacher.

“I view it as drinking.” Bennett told The Washington Monthly when asked about his gambling. “If you can’t handle it, don’t do it.”

That sounds exactly like the libertarian argument for legalizing drugs.

AIRPORT SCREENING SYSTEM THREATENS PRIVACY RIGHTS

BY F. TIMOTHY MARTIN

First it was Operation TIPS, then Total Information Awareness (TIA). Now the feds are serving up to the public a new acronym as they continue to remind us how fragile privacy rights are in this country.

Computer Assisted Passenger Prescreening System (CAPPS II) will let each passenger to give their full name, address, phone number and date of birth before boarding a plane. Delta Air Lines recently started testing the system at a few airports. It is slated for full release at airports across the nation by the summer of 2004.

Recently bounced a check? Been issued a citation forjaywalking? Blew off a parking ticket? The CAPPS II system will consider all of it as it cycles through your credit, banking and criminal history to determine whether to infringe on your constitutional right for freedom of travel.

Developed by the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) in conjunction with Lockheed Martin, CAPPS II is intended to ease the burden on airport security by quickly rating each passenger to determine their potential to disrupt a commercial flight. The system translates this score into one of three colors that gets translated into a denunciation of the sixties counterculture, blaming its celebration of getting citing the worst hard-drug horror stories and applying them to marijuana as part of the scattershot category of “illegal drugs.”

While most people would agree that society’s worst drug problems are the junkie who steals anything he can, the crack gang that hits a 4-year-old kid with stray bullets in a turf battle, or the methamphetamine lab that threatens to blow up a trailer park. Bennett and Walters argue that the casual passenger has been detained when their names showed up on the secret no fly list, many of them

secret airport watch lists, a “no fly” list and a “selectee” list, which requires passengers to undergo additional searches and questioning.

Hundreds of travelers have been detained since their implementation, some for a time without any notification given to their families. Many detainees complain that they were unfairly singled out because their names are similar to those of a suspect on the list. Numerous peace activists have also been targeted, including two publishers of the San Francisco-based War Times newspaper who were held last November.

The CAPPS II system’s ongoing track record of the TSA-administered list, critics are concerned that the new CAPPS II system will only lead to a further erosion of privacy rights.

“There is the worst way to run a suspicion system,” said Lee Tien, a senior staff attorney at the Electronic Frontier Foundation. “It doesn’t give any chance of knowing why there’s suspicion. We just don’t see how you can maintain due process when it’s not clear what’s actually going into risk assessment.”

For their part, the developers of CAPPS II state that “privacy and security are equal priorities.” In a press release given in March, the TSA attempted to assuage fears by claiming it “will not see the data used to generate scores” and “will not retain any information whatsoever about travelers.” The same release dismisses critics who contend that credit and banking histories would inhibit a person from flying.

So why bother checking?

Privacy rights groups are asking that question as they attempt to mount resistance to CAPPS II. “When the federal government tells me not to worry about privacy because we have information technology in place, that’s not very comforting,” said Tien.

The ACLU is also at the forefront of opposition to the federal transportation watch lists created in the wake of September 11. In California, 339 air passengers have been detained when their names showed up on the secret no fly list, many of them
IRAQ IN BRIEF

MAYBE IT WAS ALL ABOUT OIL AFTER ALL

After ignoring the Security Council before invading Iraq, the Bush administration has now asked the United Nations to legitimize the Iraqi occupation and shift control of Iraqi oil to the United States and Britain.

“The proposal would give the United States far greater authority over Iraq’s lucrative oil industry than they have previously acknowledged,” reports the Washington Post.

The resolution was submitted just days after it was revealed that Halliburton – which Dick Cheney ran until he became Vice President – had business in the occupied country.

The Bush administration gave multiple reasons for the Iraqi invasion; none of them mentioned oil.

However, has pre-invasion rhetoric been matching up with post-war reality?

I WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION

On the weapons of mass destruction front, no smoking gun has yet emerged after months of searching. Tests are being conducted on a trailer found near St. Louis that is alleged to be a mobile bio warfare laboratory. Numerous other reports have repeatedly surfaced about weapons of mass destruction being uncovered; all have proven untrue. Amidst the clamor of the war, and even among some supporters, skepticism is running high. Writing in The New York Times, Paul Farmer asks whether most of the public will ever learn that the original case for war has turned out to be false.

I LIBERATION OF THE IRAQI PEOPLE

Protests continue to intensify across Iraq against the U.S. presence. In Mosul, U.S. troops gunned down demonstrators. U.S. forces are also monitoring and blocking broadcasts of Al Jazeera on Mosul’s only TV station. “Yes, what we are looking at is a sort of media terrorism,” says a U.S. official to CNN. “We can’t do anything about it, and that is intended to inflame passions,” said 1st Lt. commander, Maj. Gen., David Petraeus. Also on the media front, the U.S. government has hired a fundamentalist Christian outfit, Grace Digital Media, to help produce a new Arabic satellite station for Iraq to counter Al Jazeera.

The conquest was just the first stage.

“Weapons of mass destruction” were the real reason for the invasion, and the rest was just for show!

I REGIME CHANGE

While Saddam Hussein is gone, the United States has been returning Baath Party members to power. In early May, hundreds of Iraqi state employees, dressed in white suits marched in Baghdad chanting: “New era! New clean figures!” They were protesting Washington’s selection of a prominent Baath Party official to head the Health Ministry, who later resigned.

I GETTING FILTHY RICH IN AMERICA

RUMSFELD & IQAQ:

The National Security Archive, located at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., posted recently declassified documents on its website, including a video clip detailing the U.S.-run company, Rumsfeld Associates, Inc., a company created by Rumsfeld in the late 1980s.

In the video, Rumsfeld is shown discussing his company’s role in the reconstruction of Iraq and the sale of “new era! new clean figures!”

On April 28, 2003, Fortune magazine reported: “Washington’s amiable 1930s-era Republican, Rumsfeld was on his Board of Directors at ABB.”

While Rumsfeld was a Republican, ABB was a Swiss company. Rumsfeld supposedly sold Rumsfeld Associates’ interests in the company to a Swiss businessman.

In the video, Rumsfeld declared that “the administration is committed to freedom and democracy” in Iraq. The audience erupted in applause.

However, Fortune reported that Rumsfeld received a $200 million deal, and that “the administration is committed to freedom and democracy” in Iraq.

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**MINISTERS OF DISINFORMATION**

As American forces rumbled toward Baghdad in the war’s final moments, Iraqi Information Minister Mohammed Saeed al-Sahaf continued to bluster that U.S. troops were suffering heavy casualties and hearing certain defeat. His bizarre pronouncements earned him a cult following in the United States, and his fame has only grown since Saddam Hussein was deposed. A website, www.welovejudithmillerauthorinformationminister.com, has been erected in his honor.

Now, New York Times correspondent Judith Miller has undertaken an equally Herculean task: convincing the world that Iraq really did possess weapons of mass destruction that threatened humanity. Miller has risen to the challenge with remarkable skill. Despite her best efforts, Miller has yet to gain the infamy enjoyed by Minister Saeed al-Sahaf. At least not yet. www.welovejudithmillerauthorinformationtimes.com, anyone?

“There are no American infidels in Baghdad. Never!” IRAQI INFORMATION MINISTER MOHAMMED SAEEED AL-SAHAF

“Our initial assessment is that they will all die.”

“I can say, and I am responsible for what I am saying, that they have started to commit suicide under the walls of Baghdad. We will encourage them to commit more suicides quickly.”

“That bastard the American Minister of Defense Rumsfeld, and I won’t say shamelessly, because they don’t know what shame means. These are criminals. The whole world [sic] can hear the warning sirens. This criminal sitting in the White House is a pathetic criminal and his Defense Minister deserves to be beaten.”

“We’re going to drag the drunken junkie nose of Bush through Iraq’s desert, him and his fellow dog Blair... There are 26 million Saddams in Iraq.”

“Those Iraqi fighters are shattering those gangsters on the face, and then when they flee, they will kick their backsides.”

“They are retreating on all fronts. Their military effort is a facade, and then when they flee, they will kick their backsides.”

“The Iraqi fighters are slapping those gangsters on the face, and then when they flee, they will kick their backsides.”

“They are retreating on all fronts. Their military effort is a subject of laughter throughout the world.”

“I can assure you that those villains will recognize, will discover in appropriate time in the future how stupid they are and how they are pretending things which have never taken place.”


**“I think they found something more than a Smoking gun.”**

**JUDITH MILLER, NEW YORK TIMES CORRESPONDENT**

“I think they found something more than a ‘smoking gun.’ What they’ve found is what is being called here by the members of MET Alpha — that’s Mobile Exploitation Team Alpha — what they found is a silver bullet in the form of a person, an Iraqi individual, a scientist, as we’ve called him, who really worked on the programs, who knows them firsthand, and who has led MET Team Alpha people to some pretty startling conclusions.”

— The News Hour With Jim Lehrer, April 22nd

“Under the terms of her accreditation to report on the activities of MET Alpha, this reporter was not permitted to interview the scientist or visit his home. Nor was she permitted to write about the discovery for three days, and the copy was then submitted for a check by military officials.”

Those officials asked that details of what chemicals were uncovered be deleted.”

— NTTimes, April 21st

“Based on what the Iraqi scientist had said... military officials said they now believed that they might not find large caches of illicit chemicals or biological agents, at least in Iraq.”

— NTTimes, April 23rd

“This reporter was not permitted to visit the warehouse but heard descriptions of it from Americans who went to the site.”

“Iraqis have told American weapons experts that Iraqi scientists tested various agents on dogs and other animals at this site, the experts said. There was no immediate way to verify this claim.”

— NTTimes, April 23rd
ARMED WITH PRINCIPLES

BY ALI ABUNIMAH

In February, Rachel Corrie, a 23-year-old college student from Olympia, Washington, wrote an e-mail to Gaza to her family back home. Corrie observed, “I don’t know if many of the children here have ever existed without tank-shell holes in their walls and the towers of an occupying army sur- veying them constantly from the near horizons. I think, although I’m not entirely sure, that even the smallest ones among them would not understand life is not like this everywhere.” Corrie wanted to change those children’s reality. On March 16, she was killed, but that is not the end of the story. The Israeli army investigated itself and exonerated its personnel of any responsibility in Rachel Corrie’s death. But photographs and eyewitness accounts show Corrie was clearly visible, wearing the bright red vest, with her head and face from a heavy metal calibre gun, at a time when no clashes were reported in the area.

And on April 17, Thomas Hurndall, 21, a British citizen, was shot by Israeli forces near Rafah, in Gaza, as he escorted a group of Palestinian children from the school. Hurndall is on life support in an Israeli hospital, with a gunshot wound to the head and there is almost no hope of recovery. Again, there was no fighting reported in the area, and, like Corrie, photographs show that Hurndall wore a bright red vest.

Many activists fear these shootings are part of a pattern, and that Israel is deliberately targeting international journalists, so that it can carry out human-rights abuses unobserved. Whatever the truth, Americans and other foreign citizens are falling vic- tim to Israeli tactics that have killed and injured thousands of Palestinians. A lack of accountability means that such incidents could increase.

In the occupied territories, the Palestinian community has caved when faced with Israeli defiance. The differ- ence between the docile international community, on the one hand, and individuals like Corrie, Hurndall and Avery, on the other, is that these individuals refused to be turned back. They left the safety of their lives to go unarmed, except with their princi- ples, into harm’s way, because they believed someone had to act where governments refused to do so.

When you look at their ages and backgrounds, Corrie, Hurndall and Avery are similar to the American and British men and women fighting in Iraq. Although Corrie served this country’s highest ideals as faithfully as any western nation. Their families and friends are left to cope with these dev- astating tragedies alone.

At the beginning of Israel’s crackdown on the Palestinians, we could anguish at the deaths of strangers, like 12-year-old Muhammad al-Durra, or the innocent Israeli teenagers murdered in 2001 by a Palestinian suicide bomber at Tel Aviv’s discotheque. Almost two years later, with victims mounting, no one has the emotional capacity to mourn the loss. The killing of Hurndall, and the shooting of Avery and Hurndall, renew for me the sense of personal anguish at the fate of strangers. This is not because the victims are American or British, but because their presence in one of the world’s most dangerous places was not an accident. When birth, they came for love of humanity and with a thirst for justice, and paid an unbearable price.
REALITY SINKS IN: ISM volunteers recover Rachel Corrie’s passport on the day she was killed. PHOTO: Palsolidarity.org

concerned that “tank chasers” will sign up for the danger with little comprehension of the situation. Others are focused on practical responses like using larger groups and taking more measured steps to counter Israeli incursions. No one in the movement has proposed ending the delegations. No one in the movement has proposed ending the delegations.

BLINDING THE WORLD

Human rights workers aren’t the only people concerned about the use of lethal force in Gaza. The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) has called for a “full and transparent” investigation into the fatal May 2 shooting of award-winning filmmaker James Miller.

Miller was working on a documentary for HBO in the town of Rafah, which has been the epicenter of Israeli violence against internationals. Miller was investigating Israeli claims that large numbers of house demolitions in the area were necessary to curtail the smuggling of arms via tunnels to the nearby Egyptian border.

“We demand a full and transparent investigation into this shocking incident,” said CPJ acting director Joel Simon. “The Israeli army must punish those responsible for James Miller’s death.”

Simon added, “We believe that the failure of Israeli authorities to conduct serious investigations and punish those who have harmed journalists in the past has fostered a climate of impunity and recklessness among Israeli troops, making indiscriminate fire acceptable.”

MEDIA WAR

In the weeks leading up to Israel’s announcement of a zero-tolerance policy towards peace activists, unfounded allegations of ISM connections to Islamic and terrorist groups began popping up in the Israeli, American and British press.

CNN, the BBC and the Israeli press have run several stories repeating Israeli allegations that ISM members had given sanctuary to members of Islamic Jihad and that they possessed weapons. More recently, there have been stories claiming that the two British suicide bombers who recently attacked a night-club in Tel Aviv had met with activists in Gaza en route to a memorial for Rachel Corrie. An ISM spokesperson called attempts to link their activities to fundamentalists or suicide bombers “reprehensible.”

SNAPSHOT OF THE VIOLENCE

Israel has occupied Palestine since 1948. and the West Bank and Gaza Strip since 1967. The total number of Palestinian deaths since Sept. 29, 2000 is 2,298. Another 22,693 Palestinians have been injured. 12,737 Palestinians have had their homes demolished. 768 Israelis have been killed and 4,858 Israelis have been injured.

SUMMER, 2002:

Hundreds of international activists flood the Occupied Territories to participate in the ISM’s Freedom Summer Campaign: “54 days of nonviolent, direct action by Palestinians and Internationals to promote freedom and justice for Palestine – one day to symbolize each year that Palestinians have lived under occupation.” These activities include helping Palestinians cross Israeli checkpoints, protecting Palestinian homes from demolition and providing international and media presence at nonviolent Palestinians demonstrations.

First deportations of ISM activists begin. Dozens more, suspected of being ISM activists, are denied entry at Israel’s border.

AUGUST, 2002:

A “full and transparent” investigation into the shocking incident, “a minor group such as the JDO will not and cannot stop the JDO’s event. The paper’s staff thanked supporters and said that accusations from a “minor group such as the JDO will not and cannot shut down the College Voice.” – Jared Burton
BY VANESSA HRADSKY

April 9, Congress passed the Clean Diamond Trade Act to stop the use of “blood diamonds” as funding for some of the world’s most brutal regimes. Yet while many elected officials and diamond industry insiders recognize the threat, legislation, most in the non-governmental sector, remains piecemeal and self-monitoring. The Clean Diamond Trade Act, whose sponsors included Representatives Amo Houghton (R-NY) and Charles Rangel (D-NY), mandates that the United States abide by the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS). The KPCS is a new international diamond certification program intended to halt the trade in blood diamonds. The term “blood diamond,” or “conflict diamond,” refers to diamonds used to fund wars and other atrocities in many parts of Africa, including Sierra Leone, Angola and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

The campaign has convinced women that they should receive a diamond ring for their engagement and men that they should pay “two months’ salary” for that ring to show how much their love is worth. The average diamond on a ring is marked up 100 to 200 percent. According to the Diamond Information Center at W. Thompson (De Beers’ advertising agency), the U.S. diamond jewelry market is now valued at $27.4 billion, accounting for nearly half of global diamond jewelry sales.

Not surprisingly, the all-important diamond engagement ring category continues to grow despite the sluggish economy, with sales of blood diamonds from its territory have contributed to the death and mutilation of almost a million of its people, as outlined by Amnesty International’s 2002 report, “Making a killing: The diamond trade in government-controlled DRC.”

NGOs initially called for the definition of conflict diamonds to include diamonds sold by recognized governments with records of human rights abuses, not just those sold by rebel groups. They also asked that the regulations apply not only to rough diamonds but also to polished stones and jewelry. And most importantly, they lobbied for independent monitoring of the Kimberley Process. “But that was too restrictive, so now there is no criteria for membership,” said Adotei Akwei, Amnesty International’s Advocacy Director for Africa.

The World Trade Organization (WTO) was largely responsible for the failure of the KPCS to adopt the stricter regulations. “The kind of resistance we’re seeing is on the part of governments – both importers and exporters – especially because of the WTO rules,” Akwei said. “Within the WTO, there are provisions for human rights which allow for exceptions to the rule, but there was a lot of push back from member countries. They were afraid to set a precedent to policing trade and goods in a way that would slow down exports and lead to other countries retaliating by imposing restrictions on other products.”
Loose regulations are not the only shortcoming of the Kimberley Process as far as the NGOs are concerned. NGOs have long deplored the child and slave labor practices of the diamond industry, but the KPCS fails to acknowledge the abuses of workers rights that occur in “legal” mines.

Another problem is that the KPCS will be easily circumvented. The origins of diamonds are almost impossible to discern because they are relatively rare and are created under similar geological conditions, so it would be simple to transport blood diamonds from a country banned from the KPCS to a “legitimate” country from which they could be shipped. Joseph Schlussel, president of a large New York diamond wholesaler called The Diamond Registry, admitted that having to identify a rough diamond from a country banned from the KPCS to a “legitimate” country from which they could be shipped. Schlussel presided, as per the wholesaler, that the diamond’s origin would not be easy: “I am as good a diamond expert as most, but I can tell you it is practically impossible to tell where a diamond comes from, except if it’s from Canada, which brands its diamonds.” He added that in New York, “probably 2 to 5 percent of diamonds we see came from conflict areas.”

The KPCS also falls short in the area of enforcement. Globally, “each country will send a delegation of Kimberley Process participants to monitor the efforts. Statistics will be collected and compiled by each member country and sent to Abbey Chikane, the Chair of the Kimberley Process, in Johannesburg,” said Akwe. And yet he added, “no clear guidelines have been set up to expel violators from the Kimberley Process.”

Despite all the KPCS’ flaws, there is optimism that the diamond industry could be improved. “The reformation of an industry is an ongoing process. Prior to this, the diamond industry, which has global retail sales of $56 billion a year, was as opaque as an industry could possibly be. The Kimberley Process allows for some transparency though its tracking system,” declared Akwe.

**THE LUSTRATIVE DIAMOND TRADE**

Diamonds pass through many hands on their trip from the mines to the world’s retailers, who sold $56 billion of diamond jewelry in 1999. In route, nearly 70 percent of them go through De Beers’ Diamond Trading Co. in London. In 1999, they added $1.6 billion of their inventory to the amount mined, bringing to $8.4 billion the total value of diamonds produced that year.

### ROUGH DIAMOND PRODUCTION (IN BILLIONS): $8.4

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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angola</td>
<td>$0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Namibia</td>
<td>$0.4</td>
</tr>
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Diamonds gain 40 percent of their value, and lose up to half their weight, as they are manufactured into cut and polished stones. In 1999 wholesalers paid $11.8 billion for these finished diamonds.

### CUT & POLISHED DIAMOND PRODUCTION (IN BILLIONS): $11.8

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<td>Thailand</td>
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### WHOLESALE DIAMONDS (IN BILLIONS): $13.1

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<td>Thailand</td>
<td>$1.6</td>
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**Source:** Fortune Magazine Feb. 19, 2001

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**OBITUARY**

**Blues for Nina**

Nina Simone, the legendary blues and soul singer, died on April 21 at her home in France at the age of 70.

Though Simone recorded dozens of albums and performed countless concerts, her legacy is much larger than her recorded material. With her roots-blues chants, jazz piano stride and stomped-down spirituals, Simone articulated the pain and hopes of black people throughout the diaspora. She performed civil rights benefits in the Deep South. After the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., she penned the ultimate memorial “The Man of Peace is Dead,” still heard on black radio stations to this day. Her soul-stirring songs “I Wish I Knew How It Feels to Be Free” and “Young, Gifted and Black” were as much as an influence on the black liberation movement as Malcolm X and Frantz Fanon.

Furthermore, with her chiffon gowns and nonplussed attitude with audiences, Simone was the first popular grand diva, before every one-hit female artist ran the term into the ground. Nina Simone was born Eunice Waymon in 1933, the daughter of a Methodist minister. A musical prodigy, she learned the piano by age six and played ecstatic spirituals. However, her early talents could not shield her from racism. In her autobiography I Put a Spell on You, Simone recalls a recital where her parents were forced to sit in the back of the auditorium in favor of a white family. Simone refused to play until her parents were seated up front. “The day after the recital I walked around feeling as if I had been flayed and every slight, real or imagined, cut me raw. But the skin grew back again a little tougher, a little less innocent, and a little more black,” Simone said of the event.

In the tradition of blues women, she transformed herself, dropping Eunice Waymon and taking on the name Nina Simone, after the actress Simone Signoret. She played seedy bars in Atlantic City, often thumping her piano to wake up the drunks during her performances. She was as adept at the popular song as blues, scoring a numbers of hits including “My Baby Just Cares For Me” and a rendition of Gershwin’s “I Loves You Porgy.”

Despite her recording success, underhanded record deals prevented her from reaping the rewards. Simone was a tireless performer, often jamming for three or four hours, teasing her audiences into sing-alongs. Simone’s blending of multiple genres speaks to a blues philosophy, where there is no separation from the secular and the sacred – in fact the secular is sacred. Like Duke Ellington and John Coltrane, Simone moved freely from the secular and the sacred – in fact the secular is sacred. Like Duke Ellington and John Coltrane, Simone moved freely and seemingly effortlessly though gospel and the blues.

Her freewheeling style left her off the pop charts, which increased her sense of bitterness. Like James Baldwin and Josephine Baker, Simone spent her later years in France, returning to the States only occasionally to play jazz festivals. When asked by a Details reporter what effect the song “I Wish I Knew How It Feels to Be Free” had on black people, Simone replied, “I give the song to black America and they throw it back.”

However, Simone was experiencing a revival at the time of her death. She performed with Mary J. Blige, and her song “Four Women” was covered by Talib Kweli. It appears the high priestess of soul will be remembered for generations to come.
Los derechos de los inmigrantes y la lucha por la paz

By Elizabeth Martínez

Traducido por Silvia Arana

El clima anti-inmigrante que con frecuencia impera en los Estados Unidos, se intensifica en tiempos de guerra y de recesión económica. Hoy, mientras el gobierno de Obama funda su política militarista, los derechos humanos y civiles de los inmigrantes están bajo ataque.

Por ello, los defensores de los derechos de los inmigrantes debemos involucrarnos en la lucha contra el militarismo. No podemos desestimar nuestra responsabilidad diciendo que la guerra está lejos. No podemos decir que los inmigrantes no conectan con su guerra con sus necesidades diarias de subsistencia. No podemos decir que es suficiente trabajar por la legalización, aunque este sea un objetivo tan importante.

Al mismo tiempo, el movimiento contra la guerra, necesita ver que los derechos de los inmigrantes y la situación béllica están estrechamente relacionados. Si el movimiento contra la guerra logra establecer esta conexión será la mejor manera de involucrar y movilizar a la clase trabajadora, especialmente a la gente de color. Si logramos unificar, uniendo ambos movimientos, nos convertiremos en la fuerza poderosa que hace falta para cambiar la política de Estados Unidos. ¿Cuáles son algunas de las conexiones clave? Desde el 11 de septiembre del 2001, hemos presenciado cómo miles de inmigrantes han sido hostigados, echados, detenidos e incluso deportados, en nombre de la guerra contra el terrorismo. Si han establecido nuevos centros de detención a lo largo de las fronteras, miles de trabajadores de aeropuertos han sido y están siendo echados de sus trabajos porque no son ciudadanos.

Las tres leyes antiterroristas sancionadas hasta ahora –Acta Patriótica, Acta de Seguridad de Aviación y Transporte y Acta de Reforma de Viva y Mayor Control de Fronteras- tienen como blanco a los inmigrantes. La guerra contra ¡Arabia! presentó más excusas para la represión. Ya sabemos como es este tema. Durante la Segunda Guerra Mundial más de 200 mil japoneses americanos fueron internados en campos de detención.

Los derechos de los inmigrantes a satisfacer sus necesidades humanas básicas también están siendo atacados. Los recortes del presupuesto a los servicios sociales ponen en peligro las vidas de las personas mientras se incrementa el presupuesto para la maquinaria militar que ya ha llegado a los 335 mil millones de dólares. Las posibilidades de los inmigrantes de obtener seguro social, cuidado infantil, atención médica, educación se han venido reduciendo paulatinamente y ahora, la caída es drástica. También sabemos que las guerras que hace Estados Unidos son racistas. Como es profundamente racista el militarismo como política internacional. La gran mayoría de los inmigrantes que llegan a Estados Unidos en la actualidad son personas de color. La vigilancia selectiva de personas hispanas y latinas, que ya era un problema antes del 11 de septiembre del 2001, se ha intensificado y se ha extendido. Ahora afecta a un amplio rango de grupos étnicos de inmigrantes: personas de origen árabe y del sudeste asiático, a musulmanes, a cualquier hombre que lleve en su cabeza algo que no sea una gorra de béisbol –por no decir, una mujer que “debe ser” terrorista puesto que se ha cubierto la cabeza con un pañuelo.

El militarismo de Estados Unidos es racismo en su máxima expresión, como lo demuestra la historia de intervenciones durante el periodo posterior a la Segunda Guerra Mundial. El término intervenciones es una manera diplomática de describir acciones que van desde los golpes de estado contra gobiernos elegidos democráticamente hasta invasiones militares directas para deponer gobiernos que no favorezcan los intereses de Estados Unidos. Esta historia –que se extiende desde América Latina hasta las islas del Pacífico, Asia, África, todas las tierras de gente de color– ha causado un gran éxodo desde esos países hasta Estados Unidos. La guerra exterior y la guerra doméstica son parte de la misma cadena de racismo y militarismo que opime a los inmigrantes.

La conexión es demasiado clara. La lucha por los derechos de los inmigrantes y la lucha contra el militarismo de Estados Unidos son las dos caras de una misma lucha.

Elizabeth Martínez es la directora del Instituto por Justicia Multirracial.