

THE INDY WINS BIG AT THE IPA PRESS AWARDS! SEE P 3

THE INDYPENDENT

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Invisible Soldier

Iraq vets are landing on the streets. More are on the way.
SEE PAGE 4

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ANTHONY CASALE



UGANDA
PEACE ON
ONE SMALL
CORNER
OF EARTH

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THE ONLY
MUSICIAN
THAT
MATTERED

PAGE 10

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WHAT IS INDYMEDIA?

With autonomous chapters in more than 100 cities throughout the world, the Independent Media Center is an international network of volunteer media activists.

The IMC seeks to create a new media ethic by providing progressive, in-depth and accurate coverage of issues. We are a community-based organization using media to facilitate political and cultural self-representation. We seek to analyze issues affecting individuals, communities and ecosystems by providing media tools and space to those seeking to communicate. We espouse open dialogue and placing the means of communication and creativity back in the hands of the people, away from the drive of profit.

The Independent is funded by benefits, subscriptions, donations, grants and ads from organizations and individuals with similar missions.

WHAT CAN I DO TO GET INVOLVED?

The IMC has an open door. You can write for *The Independent*, film events and rallies, self-publish articles to the web, take photos or just help us run the office. As an organization relying on volunteer support, we encourage all forms of participation.

The print team reserves the right to edit articles for length, content and clarity. We welcome your participation in the entire editorial process.

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PREACHING THE GOSPEL OF REVOLUTION

BY KIERA BUTLER

On the third Sunday of advent, the Reverend Earl Kooperkamp told his congregation at St. Mary's Episcopal Church to go.

"Go. Scram. Get outta here," he said, flicking his hand at the 30 or so congregants in the pews.

Actually, he was (very loosely) quoting Jesus Christ. Christ, Kooperkamp explained, was always telling people to "go." To go spread his teachings. To go fight injustice.

To go sit in church on Sunday, Kooperkamp said, was not enough.

St. Mary's Episcopal Church, a gothic-style cathedral nestled among public housing complexes, delis and a police station, stands on 126th Street between Broadway and Amsterdam Ave. Founded in 1823, it is the second oldest church in Harlem, and it was the first "free pew" church; congregation members never had to pay to worship.



The gregarious Reverend Kooperkamp remains animated after the 10a.m. service, as he runs off to a vestry meeting. Below Left: Reverend Kooperkamp succors a parishioner, and they're both left laughing. PHOTOS: ANTRIM CASKEY

When Reverend Kooperkamp became pastor of St. Mary's Church four and a half years ago, he knew he wanted to continue the tradition of community activism.

Shortly after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, Kooperkamp hosted the founding meeting of Not in Our Name, a group that demonstrates against what he calls "the American war machine." He also led the church to support the Peace Tax Fund Bill, which would allow conscientious objectors not to pay war tax. Congregants meet at St. Mary's to fight against the death penalty, to preserve immigrants' rights and to keep public housing in Harlem safe.

And St. Mary's hosts more than just church groups.

"It's a base area for all kinds of social and political activity, all the way from Hillary Clinton coming here to meetings about revolution," said Phil Farnham, 71, as he distributed fliers for the New York City chapter of the Revolutionary Communist Party, which meets at the church.

"The things that we move against at St. Mary's are the imperial institutions," said Kooperkamp. "I believe that the Christian religion is based on freedom."

Kooperkamp, 48, lists among his major regrets in life never having seen the Clash play live. He is slight with brown hair and light blue eyes. While he's preaching, he moves constantly.

According to Kooperkamp, approximately three-quarters of the 175-member congregation are African-American, and the remaining quarter are white and Hispanic. Some members are Columbia professors, and others are homeless.

But Kooperkamp said it wasn't hard for members to find common ground.

"We have something in common, which is that we live in West Harlem," he said.

The last traces of Kooperkamp's drawl

come out when he pronounces the name of the city where he grew up. "Low-ville," he says for Louisville, Kentucky. He remembers going to church with his family during the Vietnam War; it was during that time that he realized that he wanted to be a pastor and that he didn't want to fight in the war. After graduating from Hampshire College, he enrolled in Union Theological Seminary in Morningside Heights.

In the early 1980s while he was in seminary, Kooperkamp wasn't sure he was in the right place. He had been listening to punk rock for a while, and he remembered the night he saw the Ramones live in an acoustically perfect auditorium as one of the high-lights of his life. Sometimes, he looked around at his fellow seminarians and suspected he might not fit in.

But as he saw leaders like renowned scholar Cornel West preaching radical politics, he began to realize religion was "one of the most subversive things on earth."

The past few years have been a trying time to be a socially liberal pastor. Kooperkamp has watched conservatism increasingly dominate the religious community. When conservative leaders co-opt radical language, he is outraged.

He remembers listening to the Reverend Richard Land, a Southern Baptist leader, comparing the fight against abortion to the abolitionist movement.

"To couch the anti-abortion movement in that kind of language is to knock down the liberation women have been able to achieve," Kooperkamp said.

And in New York City, some people equate "Christian" with "fundamentalist" or even, Kooperkamp says, "crazy."

"These people that think it's wacko, they don't know the half of it," said Kooperkamp.

"To have a sister or brother say 'I'm praying for you,' when you're struggling - it's an amazing gift of grace."

WHERE DO I GET MY COPY OF THE INDEPENDENT?

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**Bluestockings
Books & Café**
172 Allen St.

Times Up!
49 E. Houston St.

Lotus Café
Clinton & Stanton Sts.

Key Foods
Ave. A & E. 4th St.

**May Day Books at
Theater for the New City**
155 First Ave.
(between 9th & 10th Sts.)

Housing Works
126 Crosby St.

LGBT Center
213 W. 13th St.

14TH TO 96TH ST.

Revolution Books
9 W. 19th St.

Chelsea Sq. Diner
23rd St. & 9th Ave.

**Second Wave
Laundroceter**
55th St. & 9th Ave.

Ziggies
94th St. & 2nd Ave.

ABOVE 96TH ST.

Labyrinth Books
536 W. 112th St.

96th St. Library
112 E. 96th St.

Kim's Books
113th St. & Broadway

Strictly Roots Restaurant
123rd & Adam Clayton
Powell

Coogan's Bar
169th St. & Broadway

**Fort Washington
Bakery & Deli**
808 W. 181st St.

Jumpin' Jalapenos
W. 207th St.
(between B'wy & Vermillia)

Cafe Seven
7 Henshaw St.

BROOKLYN

Tillie's of Brooklyn
248 Dekalb Ave.

Green Apple Café
110 Dekalb Ave.

Marquet Patisserie
680 Fulton St.

Haleycon
227 Smith St.

Moda Cafe
294 5th Ave.

Freddy's Bar and Backroom
Dean St. & 6th Ave.

BAM
30 Lafayette Ave.

Community Book Store
7th Ave. & Carroll Sts.

Tea Lounge
Union St. @ 7th Ave.
9th St. @ 7th Ave.

**Atlantis Super Laundry
Center**
472 Atlantic Ave.

Photoplay Video
933 Manhattan Ave.

Verb Cafe
Bedford Ave. & N. 5th St.

Jane Doe Books
93 Montrose Ave.

**Make the Road
by Walking**
301 Grove St.

QUEENS

Sunnyside Library
43-06 Greenpoint Ave.

East Elmhurst Library
95-06 Astoria Blvd.

Jackson Heights Library
35-51 81st St.

Friend's Tavern
78-11 Roosevelt Ave.

Langston Hughes Library
100-01 Northern Blvd.

Café Anbergine
49-22 Skillman Ave.

Sunnyside Library
43-06 Greenpoint Ave.

Tupelo Bar
35th St. & 34th Ave.

Book Value
Broadway between
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Witch-hunt Targets Columbia Prof

BY CHRIS ANDERSON

As Columbia University students begin their winter break, the campus remains in turmoil over accusations of harassment in the school's Middle Eastern and Asian Languages and Cultures Department (MEALAC).

A faculty committee is investigating charges that MEALAC Professor Joseph Massad intimidated Israeli and Jewish students in his classroom. The investigation has in turn sparked an outcry as Columbia University admitted that no formal student complaint has been "initiated through any of the formal processes at the university" against Massad.

The accusations, instead, first appeared in a 20-minute film, *Columbia Unbecoming*, which circulated around the university this October. *Columbia Unbecoming* was produced by the



Professor Joseph Massad PHOTO: J. ADAS

David Project, a Boston-based organization that declares itself "a proud member of the Israel on Campus Coalition," and sees its mission as promoting "the truth about Israel" on university campuses.

Massad denies that he harassed or intimidated students, countering that *Columbia Unbecoming* "is the latest salvo in a campaign of intimidation of Jewish and non-Jewish professors who criticize Israel." In a statement posted on Columbia's website, Massad says, "This witch-hunt aims to stifle pluralism, academic freedom, and the freedom of expression on university campuses in order to ensure that only one opinion is permitted, that of uncritical support for the State of Israel."

Monique Dols, a history student at Columbia and member of the Ad Hoc Committee to Defend Academic Freedom, echoes Massad's arguments. "These accusations... are at best dishonest and at worst slanderous, a politically motivated campaign of intimidation against individuals on campus that dare crit-

icize Israeli foreign policy."

Since the harassment charges were made public, Massad has received numerous pieces of hate mail, including an email from Moshe Rubin, a professor of medicine at Columbia. According to the *Columbia Spectator*, it read in part: "Go back to Arab land where Jew hating is condoned. Get the hell out of America. You are a disgrace and a pathetic typical Arab liar."

Massad is one of several MEALAC professors being targeted in an orchestrated campaign by Campus Watch, which has been labeled a "blacklisting project" for its attacks against academics critical of Israel.

An Oct. 29 article in the *The Jewish Week* pokes further holes in the harassment charges. The article, based on almost two dozen interviews with current and former MEALAC students, found that "a much different picture emerges than the one seemingly portrayed [in *Columbia Unbecoming*]... Most of the complaints on campus appear to be from pro-Israel activist students not in the MEALAC program."

Israeli native Lia Mayer-Sommer told *The Jewish Week* that "it wasn't fun to be the only Israeli in [Massad's] class, but I never felt intimidated. Passionate, emotional, but not intimidated."

Despite the flimsiness of the charges and concerns that the campaign is part of a broader agenda to curtail academic freedom, Columbia has responded swiftly to the claims of intimidation. A month-long investigation by Provost Alan Brinkley concluded that Columbia's grievance procedure was "inadequate" and called for "an ad hoc committee, drawn from the faculty, to hear student complaints and, when appropriate, investigate them." This committee is continuing to examine the charges against MEALAC.

Some Columbia students are concerned that the right soundly out-organized left-wing campus groups. "We don't have the funders and we don't have the support of the tabloid media in New York," Dols said in response to a reporter's question at a Dec. 7 press conference. "But the meetings of the Coalition to Defend Academic Freedom have been large, and in terms of spirit and in terms of interest we feel we're ahead of the other side."

But frustration over a lack of a response among supporters of the besieged professors boiled over at the press conference. "Nothing's happening here at all," complained a visibly agitated student in the audience. "Are we just going to sit around and wait until they attack another professor on bogus charges, or until they fire this one? What's going on in this country these days?"

CHAOS AT CASA DEL SOL

Police (right) look on as a pair of protesters drop a banner from the top of Casa del Sol during a Dec. 12 protest. Moments later, police attacked a crowd of about 60 people who had gathered outside the long-time community center. Seven people were arrested.



Casa del Sol, located on 672-674 E. 136th St. in the South Bronx, has been home to a number of activists and cultural projects since it was first squatted 20 years ago. It hosted hundreds of RNC protesters in August, about 30 of whom stayed to help revitalize the space. Police cleared the building Nov. 30. Hours later, it was gutted by a mysterious, four-alarm fire. The building is now under the control of ACORN, a controversial non-profit group that has vowed to build affordable low-income housing in the building.

PHOTOS:

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Student Residence on CHARAS Site Nixed

BY SARAH STUTEVILLE

Councilwoman Margarita Lopez, a long-time activist in the four-year fight to reclaim the old P.S. 64 building from developer Gregg Singer, announced a remarkable victory to a cheering crowd of Lower East Side residents at a Dec. 15 community meeting.

"Today, Mr. Singer's request for a permit to demolish and build a dorm tower was disapproved by the city," she said, as the meeting of about 50 local citizens whistled and clapped in the auditorium of the new P.S. 64 school on E 10th St., one block from the original building on E 9th St.

Singer was unavailable for comment. The controversy surrounding the old P.S. 64 building began in 1998 when Singer bought the property for \$3.15 million at a city auction. After a prolonged court battle, Singer succeeded in evicting "CHARAS/El Bohio," the arts and community center that had resided there for more than two decades. Last March, Singer announced plans to build a 23-story student residency on the site, angering many community groups and local citizens.

In response to Singer's plans, activists at the East Village Community Coalition (EVCC) compiled a history of the old P.S. 64 school in an attempt to highlight the historic

importance of the building and encourage the New York City Landmarks Preservation Committee to place P.S. 64 on the landmark registry, a move that would permanently protect the almost 100-year-old building, built by renowned architect C.B.J. Snyder.

The EVCC documented its vibrant past in a report titled, "The Significant History of Public School 64," which reveals that P.S. 64 alumni include songwriter Yip Harburg ("Somewhere Over the Rainbow") and actor Sam Levene. The report also noted that Elizabeth Irwin, famous educator and creator of IQ tests, worked at the school from 1912 to 1921.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the school fell into disrepair and was closed, and was soon taken over by drug dealers. In the late 1970s, a group of young Latinos who called themselves CHARAS began building it into the community center that it remained until the 1998 auction.

"It is important to save this building not just for the architectural preciousness of it, but also because it is a landmark for the community," said Lopez, emphasizing there was much work to be done despite the victory.

"I will go to Congress and apply for \$1 million for this institution," Congresswoman Nydia Velazquez told the meeting, "but I must go to them with a specific plan for what we want to do."

THE INDY WINS BIG AT THE IPPIES!

THE INDEPENDENT WON 11 "IPPIES" DEC. 15 AT THE INDEPENDENT PRESS ASSOCIATION'S ANNUAL AWARDS DINNER, THE MOST OF ANY PAPER IN THE CITY.

THE AWARD WINNERS WERE:

- Lenina Nadal 1st Place Best Article on the Arts
- Sarah Stuteville 1st Place for best feature
- Bennett Baumer 2nd Place Best Investigative News Story
- Catriona Stuart, Jed Brandt & James Powell 2nd Place Best Overall Design
- Irina Ivanova 2nd Place Best Article on the Arts
- Meredith Mandell 2nd Place Best Article on Immigrant Issues
- Catriona Stuart 2nd Place Best Feature
- Catriona Stuart & F. Timothy Martin 3rd Place Best Article on Immigrant Issues
- Steven Wishnia 3rd Place Best Public Affairs Article
- Leigh Ann Caldwell Honorable Mention Best Investigative News Story
- Yoni Mishal Honorable Mention Best Editorial/Commentary

Launched in Sept. 2000, *The Independent* is a not-for-profit, volunteer-based, collectively-run newspaper. Weekly open meetings are held 7 p.m. Tuesdays at our office at 34 E. 29 St., 2nd Fl. Next meeting: Jan. 4. For more information, call 212-684-8112.

THANKS, NOW GET LOST

BY CHRIS ANDERSON

Not content to simply send its young men (and later young women) off to fight and die in foreign wars, the U.S. government has frequently ignored its returning veterans. While the 1944 G.I. Bill has assumed mythical status, other government policies toward returning vets have been less inspiring.

WORLD WAR I "BONUS ARMY:"

In 1932, tens of thousands of jobless veterans led by a former cannery worker named Walter W. Walters, began arriving in Washington, D.C., to demand payment of a bonus Congress had approved for their service in World War I. Veterans waited nearly two months, but the Senate ultimately failed to ratify the bonus. Major General Douglas MacArthur ordered a force of 600 soldiers, and tanks to wipe out the veterans camp on July 28. Hundreds were injured and four killed during the course of the day. *The New York Times* wrote on July 29, "Flames rose high over the desolate Anacostia flats at midnight and a pitiful stream of refugee veterans of the World War walked out of their home of the past two months, going they knew not where."

VIETNAM:

Vietnam veterans returned home from a brutal war facing a lack of government support and desperately trying to come to grips with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Thousands of Vietnam vets still suffer from PTSD today. What's more, tens of thousands of Vietnam veterans have had to deal with the lingering effects of exposure to the chemical defoliant Agent Orange.

GULF WAR I:

Repeating the longtime denial of the side effects of Agent Orange, Washington attempted to mount a similar coverup of "Gulf War Syndrome." Atul Guwande wrote in *Slate Magazine* in 1996, "After returning home, American, Canadian, and British veterans began reporting a variety of chronic symptoms including fatigue, joint pain, headache, difficulty sleeping, diarrhea, or nausea." More than 100,000 veterans are believed to be suffering from Gulf War Syndrome. The condition is thought to be a result of the toxic battlefield, the use of experimental vaccines on troops and the military's large-scale introduction of depleted uranium munitions.

GULF WAR II:

With the second Gulf War not even over, George W. Bush has closed seven veterans hospitals and cut veterans health benefits. Bush's budget for 2006 is expected to cut funds for Veterans Affairs by 3.4 percent or roughly \$1 billion.

Soldier's Story

A PERILOUS JOURNEY FROM FLATBUSH TO FALLUJA
AND BACK LEAVES HEROLD NOEL OUT IN THE COLD



HEROLD NOEL TAKES A BREAK: "I have an anger problem. I still got that war mentality. This whole ordeal is breaking up my family." PHOTO: ©ANDREW STERN/ANDREWSTERN.NET

BY JOHN TARLETON

Four nights before Christmas, former U.S. Army specialist Herold Noel huddled for warmth in front of a fire he built for himself in Brooklyn's Prospect Park as temperatures slid toward the single digits. Plagued by nightmares and unable to hold a steady job or get the assistance he needed, he was on the verge of losing his wife and three young children. It wasn't the homecoming he'd expected after serving in Iraq last year.

"There was one time," he recalled, "when me and my battle buddies made a fire and we were sittin' out there in Iraq and talking about when we get home we're gonna be looked at as heroes. We're gonna be in the history books. Man, half the guys I came back with are going through the same thing I'm going through."

According to the Pentagon, 955,000 U.S. troops have already served in the Afghanistan and Iraq wars. The experiences of Noel and others like him have many observers worried that the country will be inundated by a wave of returning veterans with no place to go and reeling from psychological trauma, as happened toward the end of the Vietnam War.

According to a recent study in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, up to 17 percent of troops returning from Iraq "met the screening criteria for major depression, generalized anxiety, or PTSD [post-traumatic stress disorder]."

"The Bush administration didn't plan going into the war," says Paul Reickhoff, Executive Director of Operation Truth, a growing online organization of Iraq veterans. "And they haven't planned for the back end of the war and the social services that will be needed. It's an extension of a flawed plan."

Ricky Singh, of the Brooklyn-based Black Veterans for Social Justice, is also alarmed. His group was helping three Iraq vets a year ago. Now, he says it's assisting 30 Iraq vets, 18 of whom are homeless, including Noel and his family and a pregnant woman who is expected to give birth this month.

"We know this is the tip of the iceberg, because vets tend to be a group that doesn't seek out help," Singh told *The Independent*. The *New England Journal* study found that of the veterans who met the criteria for a mental disorder, less than 40 percent reported receiving

professional help in the past year.

Nationally, there are signs of the same problem. In Cincinnati, Ohio, Charles Blythe, director of the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program, says his group is already assisting three homeless Iraq and Afghanistan vets, and he expects many more to come. "Once they start bringing them home, we're going to be flooded with them, just like with Vietnam," says Blythe, a Vietnam-era veteran.

According to the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans, nearly 300,000 veterans are homeless on any given night, and almost half of those are Vietnam vets.

A SOLDIER'S STORY

Noel, 25, was born and raised in Flatbush. He was attending New York City Technical College and working as a medical-claims processor when he enlisted in the army in September 2000. He was attracted by both the promised benefits and the chance to "see some new scenery." Noel served in the 3rd Infantry Division 7th Cavalry as part of the original invasion force, working in fuel resupply. He witnessed the human carnage wreaked by U.S. bombs soon after he crossed into southern Iraq. He also watched friends lose life and limb as his unit was repeatedly ambushed by rebels near Falluja. He left Iraq in August 2003.

Combat experiences such as Noel's have a strong bearing on whether a veteran develops PTSD. The *New England Journal* study determined that among troops who engaged in more than five firefights while deployed in Iraq, the prevalence of post-traumatic stress disorder was more than 19 percent. In contrast, the rate of PTSD among Vietnam veterans is currently 15 percent.

"If you saw the way we slaughtered those people, it was disgusting," Noel said of the war's beginning. "There would be little kids laying down on the floor. Two- or three-year-olds caught in the crossfire. It was sickening."

While Noel was trapped in a war zone, the army mistakenly listed him as AWOL and cut off his pay, causing him to lose his home in Fort Stewart, Georgia. Upon returning, he moved into a trailer off-base with his wife, Tamara, and their three young children. When their car died and he was no longer able to commute to work, they decided to move back to New York.

However, Noel was a changed man and found it difficult to keep a steady job, and his family slipped through an almost nonexistent safety net.

Tamara started to notice changes in her husband about a month after they were reunited. "He'd get upset easily. We were arguing all the time. One time we got in an argument and he put me in the car and drove me to some bushes and he said he would kill me if I kept arguing with him. I was really scared. He was never like that before."

Noel still struggles with his rage, but now he disappears when he feels like he is going to explode. "I don't know where he goes," Tamara says. "He tells me sometimes he has to get away from it all."

"I have an anger problem. I still got that war mentality," Noel says. "You got that anger in you being around all that death. I still have nightmares. I'm still paranoid sometimes to walk the street, thinking something is going to happen... It's hard to be in a working situation. You're always on your guard."

While Herold sleeps outside and crisscrosses the city looking for assistance, Tamara is tempting as a clerk at a hospital and staying at her sister's home with the kids. Both Tamara and Herold are uncertain of what to do next or even if their marriage will survive. Both refuse to have their children stay in the city's squalid shelter system.

"We're willing to work," Tamara says. "We just need something temporary so we can get on our feet."

"They are in a very fragile situation," says Singh, who is trying to fast-track their case so they can get an apartment.

"My wife can't take it anymore," says Noel. "This whole ordeal is breaking up my family. She's like she needs to move on with her life. I don't know what to do."

"I walk around crying every day. I feel lost in my own land; the land I fought for. I don't know what to do no more. Sometime I just feel like picking up a gun and calling it quits - know what I'm saying? But, something's got to get better. I didn't just risk my life for nothing." Noel paused, unsure if he believed what he was to say next. "There's a God out there - somewhere."

For more information, contact Black Veterans for Social Justice at bvsj.org or 718-852-6004.

PATRIOT ACT II IS HERE

news IN BRIEF

BY MIKE BURKE

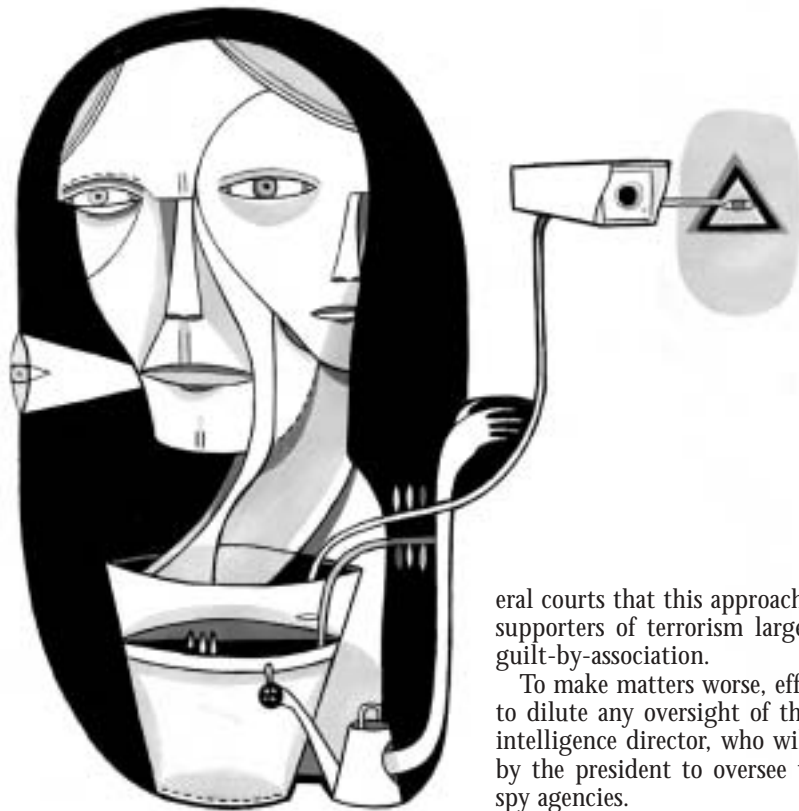
With little debate and almost no media attention, Congress has enacted a sweeping expansion of the Patriot Act as part of the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act that was signed into law Dec. 17.

As the media focused on the bill's creation of a national intelligence director post, lawmakers inserted numerous provisions that radically expand the government's policing powers – and even set up a possible system for the government to track citizens electronically by federalizing driver's licenses and embedding them with radio frequency identification chips.

The full implications of the legislation are still unknown. According to Sen. Robert Byrd (D-W.Va.), the Senate approved the bill by a vote of 98-2 without completely reviewing its contents. How could they, he asked, when they received the final 615-page version less than 24 hours before the vote?

"This reminds me of how the Patriot Act itself was enacted: in haste, with insufficient review, and with no real understanding of its true consequences," Byrd said.

Sen. Russ Feingold (D-Wisc.), who was the only senator to vote against the Patriot Act three years ago, threw his support behind the intelligence reform bill, but was highly critical of certain provisions that were unsuccessfully proposed in 2003 as Patriot Act II.



NIK MOORE: indyartsnyc.org

The bill authorizes the government to spy on any non-citizen that it considers a terrorist suspect. Until now the government had to prove to the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court that any subject of surveillance had ties to a terrorist organization or a foreign power.

Anyone arrested on terrorism charges will now be automatically denied bail and jailed until trial. Previously the government had to prove that suspects were either a flight risk or dangerous before they could be denied bail.

The bill also broadens the definition of what constitutes material support to a terrorist organization, despite rulings by fed-

eral courts that this approach to identifying supporters of terrorism largely amounts to guilt-by-association.

To make matters worse, efforts were made to dilute any oversight of the new national intelligence director, who will be appointed by the president to oversee the nation's 15 spy agencies.

The bill creates a Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board, but the White House-appointed board will be nearly powerless and without subpoena power.

"It's a civil liberties board in name only," said former Congressman Bob Barr. "It's hollow. It's probably worse than having nothing at all because it gives the appearance of having one."

The Senate had voted to create an Inspectors General post to act as a watchdog, but this provision was stripped out of the final bill.

And even Congress can't expect to get straightforward answers from the new intelligence czar – any testimony the director gives must first be approved by the White House Office of Management and Budget.

first person

Ohio Ends With a Wimper

PROTESTERS DIVIDED AS ELECTORS CAST VOTES

BY STERLING BROOKS

On Dec. 12, I traveled with five others from Manhattan to Columbus, Ohio, to participate in the "Hands Around the State House" action planned for the next day.

Twenty Republican electors were scheduled to climb the steps of the state capitol building on Dec. 13 and cast the decisive Electoral College votes for President despite the fact that the Ohio recount was not complete and there was widespread evidence of election abuses.

Right before we left New York, we learned that an "emergency hearing" was being called by a number of concerned congresspeople, including John Conyers Jr. (D-Mich) and Maxine Waters (D-Calif.), and the Rev. Jesse Jackson. The hearing was scheduled for Dec. 13 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. – the exact time of the Hands Around the State House action – at Columbus City Hall, a seven-minute walk from the capitol building.

Because the hearing would lure many people away from the electoral vote ceremony, we decided that when we got to Columbus we would work to convince people that the place to be was the State House to protest the casting of the ballots.

The weather was cold and windy with

occasional flurries when we arrived at the capitol. I was surprised to see that there were almost no police present or any police equipment, such as barricades or communications vehicles. Some media outlets were there, however, including Indymedia, NBC, Fox and some print media.

Unfortunately, there was no sign of a demonstration. We immediately phoned some contacts in Ohio who told us that everyone was at the hearing at City Hall and that it was hard to convince people to give up their comfortable seats there for the windswept streets around the State House.

Since it was still early, we decided to go over to the hearing. There were a couple hundred people there. Some voting technology experts and disenfranchised voters were testifying. The congresspeople and Jesse Jackson were also present. After our long drive we felt the environment a bit stuffy and longed to be outside directly confronting state power. We hooked up with some other folks and went to join hands around the State House. Due to the size of the capitol building and our modest numbers it was not possible to encircle it but we had a good demonstration anyway.

Lots of drivers honked and gestured in support and almost all of us gave interviews

to the media. We decided to march right through the front doors with our banners. Fox and ABC followed our every move. Once we got up the steps a few state troopers blocked our way. They said we couldn't enter with our signs and banners. Their numbers were few, but so were ours. We decided not to press the issue. The electors were already upstairs committing their fateful deeds.

Although we knew Columbus had a limited ability to muster a New York City-style police presence rapidly, we never expected there to be so few officers out. We later learned that the Columbus police definitely did not have the resources to deal with a good-sized demonstration. Their light presence was doubly curious because there was a lot of e-mail talk about the day of action and people were already mobilized on the ground in Columbus.

Were the authorities so confident that all dissent would be effectively lured over to the City Hall hearing that they felt no need to sully their pompous ceremony with an unsightly police presence? Perhaps the police really were caught off guard and we missed a great opportunity to sock it to the state.

This was adapted from an article that originally appeared at <http://nyc.indymedia.org/feature/display/136234/index.php>.

THE CIA AND THE NSF: TOGETHER AT LAST

The Electronic Privacy Information Center has obtained documents showing that the Central Intelligence Agency and the National Science Foundation jointly funded the development of software designed to spy on chat rooms. The objective of the project, housed at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, New York, was to create a "fully automated surveillance system for data collection and analysis in Internet chat rooms to discover hidden groups." More than \$157,000 was provided to the two researchers developing the spying software.

CALIFORNIA TO SUE FEDS OVER ABORTION FUNDING BAN

California Attorney General Bill Lockyer said on Dec. 8 that he will sue the federal government to block congressional legislation halting federal funds to states that enforce laws protecting reproductive rights. The Weldon Amendment to the \$388 billion spending bill passed by Congress in November would block any monies from going to federal, state or local agencies that act against doctors or insurance companies because they don't provide abortions, make referrals or cover them. The bill could block California from receiving federal funds for education, labor, health and human services. Lockyer called the legislation "a backdoor attempt to overturn Roe Vs. Wade."

EPA DESCENDING INTO THE MUCK

A new Environmental Protection Agency policy will allow sewer operators to dump inadequately treated sewage into the water whenever it rains or snows. In a reversal of previous policy, sewer operators will now be allowed to release sewage that has only undergone the first step of treatment if they blend it with fully treated sewage. This violates the Clean Water Act, which stipulates that "blended sewage" can only be dumped in emergencies, such as hurricanes or tropical storms.

A National Resource Defense Council commissioned study in November 2003 found that the risks of contracting diseases by swimming in waters receiving blended flows was 100 times as great as when the sewage was fully treated. Americans already suffer 7.1 million cases of mild-to-moderate infectious waterborne diseases every year and 560,000 moderate-to-severe cases.

RENTALS OUT OF REACH OF POOR

In only four of the nation's 3,066 counties can someone working 40 hours at minimum wage afford the rent and utilities on a one-bedroom apartment, according to a report of the National Low-Income Housing Coalition. In addition, over 80 percent of all renters live in counties where more than two full-time jobs at minimum wage are required to rent a two-bedroom apartment. The price of rent rose slightly faster (2.9 percent) than hourly wages (2.6 percent) last year.

ILLEGAL STRIP SEARCHES AT REAGAN AIRPORT

Transportation Security Administration employees at the Reagan National Airport in Washington, D.C. recently told an ABC news affiliate that stripsearches of passengers took place in public stairwells and in an office equipped with a video camera. In addition, they allege that female travelers were singled out for searches on the basis of their breast size.

Venezuela

Rejects Chavez Recall

Since populist President Hugo Chavez was elected in 1999, his socialist leanings, support for workers' and campesinos' rights, and efforts to reassert control over the state-run oil industry have angered the wealthy, who have repeatedly tried to oust him. Chavez supporters turned back a U.S.-supported military coup in April 2002, and helped defeat a general strike by the same months later. While his opponents collected enough signatures to force a recall election in August.

Orange Wave in Ukraine

After reports of rampant fraud in the Nov. 21 runoff presidential election between Viktor F. Yanukovich and Viktor A. Yushchenko, hundreds of thousands of Yushchenko supporters flooded Kiev and shut down numerous government offices. It was revealed that Yushchenko had been poisoned with dioxin, possibly at a Sept. 5 dinner with Ukraine's security agency chief and his first deputy. Ukraine's Supreme Court annulled the election results, and a new election will be held on Dec. 26. Yushchenko supporters have formed a convoy to campaign in the pro-Yanukovich Russian-speaking eastern and southern regions, but have been pelted with bottles in some locales. Meanwhile, Russia has accused the United States of meddling in Ukraine's affairs by spending some \$65 million ahead of the election. Even U.S. Rep. Ron Paul (R-TX) criticized the Bush administration for spending taxpayer dollars to elect Yushchenko.

Nepal's Guerrilla War

Nepal's Maoist rebels, modeled on Peru's brutal Shining Path guerrillas, have been fighting since 1996 to topple the country's constitutional monarchy and establish a communist state. More than 10,000 people have been killed so far. Recent reports indicate that the Communist Party of Nepal is gaining control over the countryside as it intensifies efforts to recruit Nepal's youth. Led by a shadowy man named Prachanda, the group is estimated to have a core of 10,000 to 15,000 well-trained fighters and up to 50,000 "militia" who fight alongside them.

Palestine

On May 19, Palestinians marched in Gaza to protest Israeli measures such as detaining teachers and children in an orphanage and rounding up all men over 16. A few minutes later, Israeli forces fired tank shells and helicopter missiles at the unarmed demonstrators, killing dozens including many children.

"The first explosion I heard was huge, and it targeted the front of the demonstration," photographer Johannes Aebeling stated in an affidavit to the AlMezan Center for Human Rights in Gaza. "Then, I heard several explosions and saw people running everywhere. I saw what looked to be about 50 casualties (dead and wounded); many of them children. I do not understand why an army has fired missiles into a crowd of peaceful demonstrators. This was a horrible experience."

Amnesty International said Israeli army officials told them the tanks shelled an empty building in order to deter the demonstrators from proceeding towards Israeli army positions. Israeli officials alleged that the demonstrators were led by gunmen. Amnesty International delegates and Aebeling said they did not see any armed men or hear any gunfire from the Palestinian side.

venezuela



ukraine



iraq

The Year in Revolt

Though Bush's election victory and the bloodily smoldering war in Iraq added up to a generally dismal 2004, millions of people continue to resist religious fanaticism, pandemic economic exploitation and ecological disaster.

mexico



new york city



guadalajara



palestine



nepal



Iraq

On March 19, the day before the anniversary of the U.S. invasion of Iraq, thousands of Shia and Sunni Muslims protested in Baghdad for an end to the American occupation in a strong show of unity between the two religious groups.

New York Resists Republicans

From Aug. 27 to Sept. 2, the Republican National Convention elicited a huge, well-organized and energetic protest. Citizens, protesters, anarchists, anti-war folk and veterans came out into the streets to make their voice heard. Midway through the week, Queer Fisti, a gay and lesbian direct-action group, staged a kiss-in on the steps of the New York Public Library. The group then marched west towards Times Square, where participants smooched and embraced, causing police jaws to drop. Here, two men exercise their right to kiss. Later, at least one of them (left) ended up on the wrong side of the police's orange netting.

Zapatistas Mark 10 Years

Young Zapatistas celebrate 10 years of revolt against the Mexican government on Jan. 1 in Oventic, Chiapas, by whacking a guitar (lower center). The indigenous struggle continues to emphasize community building. In the past year, new cooperatives have been created, exciting hospitals and schools received new supplies from such sponsors as the Basque government, and Radio Insurgente went online. But violence continues, as government forces torched one of the Zapatistas' central communities, Montes Adules.

Guadalajara vs. Global Plutocracy

In Guadalajara, Mexico, on May 28, protesters confronted a sea of police when they demonstrated against the third annual free-trade summit between European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean. Police brutality was rampant, with protesters severely beaten in the streets and at least 100 people arrested.

18 YEARS OF CIVIL WAR

Formed in 1986, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) was born out of political instability, religious fanaticism and fears of disenfranchisement in the north after current Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni came to power by overthrowing the regime of President Tito Okello, an ethnic Acholi.

Early in the war, LRA leader Joseph Kony declared his intention to replace Museveni's secular government with a regime rooted in the Ten Commandments. Notorious for its brutality, the LRA replenishes its ranks by abducting children, mainly Acholi. The northern districts of Gulu, Pader and Kitgum comprise Acholiland, where much of the conflict is centered. The children, who are given drugs, indoctrinated with fear and often forced to kill, are left shamed and tainted, unable to return to their homes.

Negotiations between the LRA and government representative Betty Bigombe were scuttled by Museveni in 1994 when he issued an ultimatum demanding that the rebels surrender within seven days. Yet violence continued unabated as the LRA received arms and financial support from Sudan, in response to Uganda's support of the secessionist Sudanese People's Liberation Army.

Museveni, at the prompting of the Bush administration, labeled the LRA a "terrorist organization" in 2002. The same year the Uganda People's Defence Forces launched "Operation Iron Fist" with the intent of wiping out LRA bases in southern Sudan. The military campaign only intensified the conflict, partly due to the government policy of forcing villagers into "protected" camps. A Human Rights Watch report from July 2003 estimated that 800,000 people in Acholiland, or a staggering 70 percent of the population, were internally displaced persons.

But recent talks between the two countries resulting in the suspension of Sudanese aid to the LRA have brought the rebels back to the negotiating table, and Bigombe has resumed her peace-making efforts.

Beginning in November, Museveni declared a series of ceasefires within a "gazetted zone," stretching from Acholiland into southern Sudan, where rebels were permitted to move freely in order to enable negotiations. The most recent ceasefire expired on Dec. 15 and has not yet been renewed, as each side accuses the other of violating the ceasefire.

-IMC Staff



Uganda Peace Conference Stirs Hope CIVIL CONFLICT MAY BE NEARING AN END

By NEELA GHOSHAL AND JEREMY KAMPS
PHOTOS BY NEELA GHOSHAL

BOBI, UGANDA—The residents of the Bobi Camp for internally displaced people gathered in the shadows of the immense tree at the entrance, some scrambling onto high branches for a better view. They poured out of mud huts to line the barbed wire fence, spilling over onto the red clay tarmac of the road.

Excitement mounted as youth performed a traditional dance to welcome the kings of the Acholi and Lango people – ethnic neighbors who have been at odds during the 18 years of civil war in northern Uganda. The leaders of the two groups chose Bobi, home of those who have borne the brunt of the atrocities, as the locale to deliver a message of peace and unity at the conclusion of a four-day peace-building conference in November.

"Your presence here has cured our differences," Elder Headmaster Obunya told the two kings. Won Nyaci of Lango and the Rwot Acana of Acholi. Bobi Camp houses some 20,000 people and is located near Gulu town, the largest city in northern Uganda.

The Lango and Acholi ethnic groups, known as "cultural institutions" in Uganda, have been the primary victims of the conflict between the governmental Ugandan People's Defense Forces (UPDF) and the rebel Lord's Resistance Army (LRA).

The Lango and Acholi are determined to play a role in the peace process. The cultural leaders, while lacking formal political power, are best positioned to disseminate a message of peace and reconciliation among the villagers – and associates of LRA leader Joseph Kony have indicated that they will not demobilize without assurances of their safety. On Dec. 7, LRA leaders met a delegation led by the Acholi king.

NIGHT COMMUTERS

The Acholi-Lango conference in Gulu emphasized reconciliation and reconstruction, and highlighted devastating poverty as a factor in the war. "We have identified the causes of the breakdown of societal norms. We have resolved that we want to rebuild our society so that sanity returns," said Margaret Akullo Elem, a Lango leader.

That is a tall order. The war has killed tens of thousands and displaced 1.6 million Ugandans. Many reside in squalid, overcrowded camps like Bobi, where AIDS and cholera are rampant, women walk miles in search of firewood and a filthy pond is the only source of water. Other victims of the war include the child soldiers of the LRA and over 30,000 "night commuters" – children who hike up to 10 kilometers each evening to sleep in shelters in Gulu, Kitgum and Pader towns to avoid being abducted from their villages. An estimated 20,000 children have been abducted by the LRA, many of whom have been retrieved by the UPDF. Over 10,000 former child soldiers have been taken to rehabilitation centers in Gulu, where they receive trauma therapy before returning to their communities.

Currently, the LRA consists of only a few thousand fighters, 80 percent of them children, according to Refugees International.

VICTIMIZED FROM ALL SIDES

The rebels have not been the only victimizers. Jimmy Otim, a resident at Unyama Camp near Gulu, began documenting the UPDF's own abuses in the camps, including looting, beating and raping civilians. In 2002 after the army labeled him a rebel sympathizer and threatened him with arrest, Otim fled the camp for a year.

"People have lost confidence in the UPDF," said Otim. "They're the very ones who are supposed to protect, but instead they commit atrocities."

Otim doubts the army's commitment to peace. "They are not interested in the peace process because they are doing business in the war and the war is their survival," he noted, adding that the war has provided justification for increased military spending. But most of this money "has ended up in individual pockets," charged Otim.

Many former child soldiers are recruited into the UPDF, raising

skepticism among cultural leaders of the government's commitment. The leaders suggest a different solution: creating special schools for former child soldiers and building centers to diffuse traditional values and cultural pride among youth affected by the conflict. They emphasize the importance of traditional culture in welcoming what both communities call "our children" back home from the LRA and from the camps.

"A boy who grows up in the [camps], will he know the different drums you play for ceremonies, for weddings, for mourning?" asked Victoria Nalongo, chief organizer of the peacebuilding conference. "This will be your role: to train the young people to feel proud of their culture."

Government negotiator Betty Bigombe added, "We must look to elders for the transformation to remain after the conflict is resolved."

A PLEA FOR RECONCILIATION

In December 2003 the Ugandan government asked the International Criminal Court to investigate if the LRA is guilty of war crimes. The Lango and Acholi, however, have called for amnesty extending to the LRA leadership. "There is no need for an International Criminal Court in northern Uganda," asserted philosophy professor Daniel Komahach, advocating instead a traditional Ugandan cleansing ceremony that incorporates acknowledgment of wrongs committed and an apology to the community.

Some Ugandans say even Kony should not be tried or punished. Dr. Angelo Banyana, an Acholi leader, said Kony should "go to Kenya and in some years when things calm down he can come back here to die."

The Lango and Acholi issued a communiqué at the peace conference, calling for a blanket amnesty, a role for cultural leaders in the peace process, an end to recruitment of child soldiers by both sides, and a commitment to sustainable development in the north.

"We all share the same problems. We all want peace," said Elem. "Without forgiving one another, we can never move anywhere... There is always some good, even in bad people. And that's why we should try to forgive, so the good will come out."



IRAQ'S DOWNWARD SPIRAL

AN INTERVIEW WITH WRITER CHRISTIAN PARENTI



PHOTO: ANTRIM CASKEY

“THE AMERICAN PROJECT IN IRAQ LOOKS BANKRUPT.”

BY JOHN TARLETON

Christian Parenti visited Iraq three times between August 2003 and July 2004 while reporting for *The Nation*. During his time in the country, he travelled with both the U.S. military and the Iraqi resistance, and gained a firsthand look at Iraq's downward spiral, which he chronicles in his new book, *The Freedom: Shadows and Hallucinations in Occupied Iraq*. Speaking

recently at the Small Press Book Fair, Parenti blasted the Bush administration's handling of Iraq.

“This is a classic case of an imperial elite taking leave of their senses and doing something that goes against their own interests,” he said. “Tactically and strategically, they've gotten every major decision wrong.”

Afterward, we talked about what lies ahead in the coming months for the Iraqis and their U.S. occupiers.

JT: You described Iraq as a failing state mired in total chaos. What do you expect elections to look like in January?

CP: It seems like the Shi'a are making a move to get power to pursue their agenda. That's understandable, but that's going to exacerbate tensions between the Sunni and the Shi'a, which have never been as great as has been portrayed by U.S. policymakers and the press. But now that fissure in Iraqi society is really coming to the fore. As for the elections, I don't think they will be free and fair. The United States will be pursuing its agenda. The main Sunni parties will be boycotting and there will be lots and lots of violence. It will be an attempt to legitimize the whole occupation of Iraq, which was billed as self-defense by the United States at first and is now described as a mission of mercy and democratization. For this very expensive, very dangerous, insane imperial project to have any longevity, it has to have legitimacy. These elections are window dressing so that American taxpayers will continue to pay \$4-5 billion per month and accept thousands of maimed young people every year.

JT: Did the United States break the back of the resistance in Falluja?

CP: Apparently not. They exacerbated the situation. They alienated people. They probably inflicted damage on the resistance and they're continuing to do so. But they are also recruiting people for the resistance when they destroy a city like Falluja, when they bomb mosques, when they allow Marines to camp in and shit and piss in mosques and traipse their bloody boots across mosques. That drives Iraqis insane with rage, and it means more people will join the resistance.

JT: Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and other top military officials talk about the importance of reaching a “tipping point” where people feel like the occupation is going to endure and succeed and will want to go with the side that seems to be winning. Is that tipping point reachable, or is it a desert mirage?

CP: I think it's a mirage. I think Rumsfeld is right about that, but that moment was a year-and-a-half ago. There was a moment when the Iraqis were looking at the situation and were like, “How is this going to sort out?” “What side do I take?” “Where is it really headed?” Kurdistan has its own thing going on. In the south, the Shi'ites have their own de facto state. But in central Iraq, the American project looks pretty bankrupt. The Green Zone – the heart of American power – gets mortared every day. So I don't think the psychological tipping point is going to tip in the United States' direction. I think it has tipped away from the United States. The Iraqis are starting to think the United States will never leave.

JT: How will that influence their actions?

CP: It's hard to say. For some people, it will cause them to join the resistance because they see the United States as the cause of their dissatisfaction: the United States policing cities, humiliating people, shooting people at checkpoints by mistake. All the routine depredations of military occupation. They see that as the cause of the violence and they really want it to stop. Even the people who don't support the resistance and are glad Saddam is gone would say, “The United States just has to leave the cities. They can have their bases and the oil, but they have to leave the cities. They can't be policing these cities.” They hate that. If the United States doesn't leave the cities, I imagine people will resist them more and more.

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REVIEWS

CULTURE, POLITICS AND CRITICISM



Joe Strummer's Long Shadow

LET FURY HAVE THE HOUR:
THE PUNK ROCK POLITICS OF JOE STRUMMER

EDITED BY ANTONINO D'AMBROSIO
NATION BOOKS

For a phenomenon spawned by bands that never cracked the Top 100 and broke up by 1982, punk rock has had extraordinary cultural legs, from junior-high-school pop bands to anarchist crusties. For that, Joe Strummer deserves some posthumous props. The late Clash/Mescaleros front-man played with an intensity, heart, and integrity matched by few musicians, and managed the difficult trick of creating political art without being pedantic.

Let Fury Have the Hour: The Punk Rock Politics of Joe Strummer, edited by Antonino D'Ambrosio (Nation Books), collects around two dozen pieces on Strummer's work and politics, from 1977 punk-zine interviews to academic-leftist analyses. Chuck D cites the Clash as an influence on Public Enemy, and D'Ambrosio links Strummer's legacy to that of South American political songwriters Victor Jara and Caetano Veloso.

Deceased rock critic Lester Bangs' 1977 article is the best writing here. It's often self-indulgent – at one point, Bangs digresses to note that as he's getting paid by the word, "salicylaceous" and "uh" count the same – but it captures the Clash's passion in beatnik Roman-candle prose: Strummer "divesting himself of guitar to fall on one knee in no Elvis parody but pure outside-of-self frenzy, snarling through his shattered dental bombsite." Used to a rock 'n' roll world where stars would toss groupies out of their motels post-blows without even giving them cabfare, Bangs was pleasantly shocked to find the Clash letting fans crash on the floor of their rooms. Yet even as he pronounced the band "righteous," he was presciently wondering if they'd still be able to do that once they got big.

The book's political analysis is less satisfying. It avoids the usual cliché dogmas of leftist music writing: We're spared postmodernist blather about "ironic subversiveness," the attitude that any artist on a major label is automatically a sellout, and the double-bind line that white artists influenced by Black music are racists ripping off Black culture, but white artists *not* influenced by Black music are racists ignoring Black culture. (Strummer's answer to the latter conundrum: Bring enough of your own

to the party so you're not just a lame blackface act.) Still, it tends to exaggerate the significance of the Clash's connections to Black culture. Yes, the Clash booked African-American opening acts like Grandmaster Flash and Bo Diddley, but multiracial bills like the Rolling Stones and Stevie Wonder or the Byrds and B.B. King were commonplace in the hippie era. And that the Clash copped reggae and hip-hop grooves is not such a big deal – how many white popular musicians *haven't* borrowed from Blacks?

On the other hand, the Clash did emerge at a time when niche marketing had segregated popular music after the rock'n'soul eruption of the '50s and '60s. Rock radio stations defined "rock" as "white," and MTV refused to play videos by black artists (they weren't "rock") until 1983, when CBS Records twisted its arm for Michael Jackson's "Beat It." And the Clash's 1980 rap song "The Magnificent Seven" predated the Beastie Boys by half a decade and made it onto the air at WBLS-FM, pretty fly for white guys.

Let Fury Have the Hour: The Punk Rock Politics of Joe Strummer is a worthy introduction for people less familiar with Strummer, but there are several factual and tonal errors. It was *Johnny* Ramone, not the more liberal Joey, who said "punks should have no politics or be right-wing." (That distinction is important to anyone who knows the Ramones at all.) And the '70s New York punk scene was much less racist than D'Ambrosio implies, in a judgment based almost entirely on Bangs' article "The White Noise Supremacists." The worst racism around the Clash came when they got big enough to draw mainstream American rock fans that booed hip-hop and reggae opening acts off the stage.

Which leads to the main question I wanted this book to answer: What happens when an artist tries to be progressive, but they get a reactionary audience? As inspiring as the Clash were, that was their tragedy, and you can feel the disillusionment in every weary, dolorous note of "Straight to Hell," from 1982. The answer isn't in this book, but, in another context quoted in it, Strummer told an interviewer, "It's not a good idea to run away."

—STEVEN WISHNIA

Tea, Sympathy and Abortions

VERA DRAKE

(2004)
DIRECTED BY MIKE LEIGH (125 MIN)

As Americans contemplate a possible rollback of abortion rights, British filmmaker Mike Leigh's latest film, *Vera Drake*, portrays a stifling past that might portend a repressive future. Set in post-World War II England, the film features a heroine (played astoundingly by Imelda Staunton) who helps "girls in trouble" by administering back-alley abortions. While Vera's character verges on inhumanly perfect and selfless, Leigh explores in depth the various reasons women seek abortion. Vera's gentle, understanding treatment of impoverished patients (including nonchalantly offering tea) is contrasted with expensive, guilt-inducing legal abortion, a privilege for Britain's upper crust. The authorities eventually arrest Vera, putting her through a court system Leigh subtly films as crushingly impenetrable and impersonal.

While *Vera Drake* demonstrates the hypocrisies of a society that chooses to dismiss the problems of access to abortion, the film only touches upon the political, religious and moral complexities of this hot-button issue. But in its second half, *Vera Drake* transcends its status as a "film about abortion." Leigh based the film on his family's experience, and the portrayal of the Drake family's devastation and division over Vera's impending incarceration aches with personal sadness. In painstakingly detailing how the police dehumanize a beatific woman providing a needed service, Leigh creates a powerful amalgam of Hitchcock's *The Wrong Man* and – with its shots of a destroyed, suffering innocent – *The Passion of Joan of Arc*.

—MICHAEL ROWIN

Let's Talk About Sex

KINSEY

(2004)
DIRECTED BY BILL CONDON (118 MIN)

Although not a household name like Freud, Alfred C. Kinsey stands among the 20th-century giants who pioneered the field of sex research in the face of public outcry and at the risk of their professional careers. A zoologist at Indiana University, Kinsey went on to

form an institute that studied human sexual behavior by meticulously interviewing thousands of subjects on their personal history. With the release of *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* in 1948 (later followed by a study on women), Kinsey's candid findings shook up an America still fearful and silent about promiscuity, homosexuality and masturbation, acts publicly considered unseemly but discovered to be widespread.

Kinsey director Bill Condon doesn't shirk away from his subject, boldly and maturely depicting the straitlaced professor and his assistants on their road to self-discovery as well as scientific revolution. Condon's effort is commendable at a time when sex is still veiled by the extremes of titillation and prudishness. It's a shame that *Kinsey* only reveals the tip of the iceberg for a body of work considered controversial to this day. The film forces Kinsey's life and work to conform to the format of a biopic, condensing a 66-year life and an entire society's history of sexual repression into a two-hour drama. Nevertheless, if this film is what's needed to get a serious, national conversation about sex started again, so be it. Sadly, but not surprisingly, conservative Christian groups are calling for a boycott of Condon's film.

—MICHAEL ROWIN

The Multitude Shall Inherit the Earth

MULTITUDE:
WAR AND DEMOCRACY
IN THE AGE OF EMPIRE

BY MICHAEL HARDT, ANTONIO NEGRI
427 PAGES
THE PENGUIN PRESS (2004)

After its release in paperback in July 2001, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's *Empire* quickly achieved the status of both radical postmodern political tract and publishing sensation. "A bold move away from established doctrine," wrote *The Nation*. "The 'next big thing,'" added the London *Sunday Times*. The zeitgeist hung heavy in the air. Not since Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* has a book been simultaneously so popular and so hard to understand.

The silence you hear now, three-and-a-half years later, is the sound of the non-reaction to *Multitude*, *Empire's* sequel. Apart from a few stray reviews (including a bizarre one by Francis Fukuyama in *The New York Times*) *Multitude's* release has garnered little of the excite-

ment accorded its predecessor, at least in the United States. It's a shame, because as it turns out, *Multitude* is actually a much better book. Free of the need to painstakingly outline the legal and economic contours of Empire, Hardt and Negri are now able to get down to the problem that really interests them: identifying the transcendental political subject that will resist Empire's global network.

Their answer, not surprisingly, is "the multitude": "an active social subject," which acts on the basis of "what the singularities share in common." The question about *Multitude* isn't whether it's good, or inspiring – it is both – but whether it's relevant to a world that seems very different from the one it confronted four years ago.

While everything might not have changed after September 11 (indeed, much still seems to be about the same, only worse), a few things certainly did, among them, the intellectual market for radical theoretical treatises proclaiming the end of 20th-century imperialism and the nation-state. The muttering is easy to hear, even in the bowels of the so-called anti-globalization movement: Empire is out. Imperialism (and its inevitable counterpoint, national resistance) is back in. One look at Iraq seems to confirm the obvious.

Obviously engaged with such criticisms, Hardt and Negri tackle the impact of September 11 and the "war on terror" in *Multitude's* opening section, "War." The authors argue that the state of perpetual war currently gripping the globe is really the symptom of a global civil war fought "within a single sovereign territory."

Within the framework of this global civil war, unilateral U.S. military action in Iraq can be seen as merely an aberration in a longer-term geopolitical process. By Hardt and Negri's estimate, the true exemplars of the imperial mentality during the run-up to war with Iraq were Brent Scowcroft, John Kerry, French Ambassador Dominique de Villepin, and the editorial board of *The New York Times*. Indeed, the American project in Iraq is failing precisely because the Bush administration chose to ignore its imperial advisors.

The idea of Empire as a tendency rather than a catch-all explanatory factor is the key to understanding a second important argument of *Multitude*: the rise of immaterial labor and the system-spanning changes that result from this growth. For Hardt and Negri, immaterial labor – "labor that creates immaterial products, such as knowledge, information, communication, a relationship, or an emotional exchange" – is the dominant trend within the world of production.

None of this, of course, really answers the question posed above: is *Multitude* relevant? The answer, in the end, might go something like this: It's as relevant as you want it to be. Certainly, it doesn't roll out a roadmap for how to get the United States out of Iraq, and it doesn't even offer much guidance on how to survive the next four years under Bush. It is, however, an intelligent and inspiring

book – one that, however oddly, might help us regain our optimism by thinking differently about the big picture.

Empire, Hardt and Negri argue, is still with us. And the multitude, they add, is still here too.

—C.A

Pics not Tricks in Calcutta Brothels

BORN INTO BROTHELS

(2004)
DIRECTED BY ZANA BRISKI
AND ROSS KAUFFMAN (85 MIN)

Moving through the blurred, overcrowded streets of Calcutta, India, and its dirty, hostile red-light district, Zana Briski and Ross Kauffman's new documentary, *Born Into Brothels*, introduces us to eight intelligent, witty children who become engaged with the art of photography. Briski, who was born and studied in London, made several trips to India to document prostitution and female infanticide in Calcutta. In the brothels, she came to know children whose curiosity inspired her to abandon her own photographic projects in order to teach them. The film documents this project and its potential to give the children a way out of the brothels. The desperate situation they are in is in no way mitigated by the upbeat and colorful nature of the film. Familial violence and heavy household chores are clearly illustrated both in video and the children's photographs, which form integral grounding points in the film by bringing their lives into focus.

The viewer is moved not by a sense of pity for the children, but by a sense of desperate compassion to see them escape the brothels. The strong individual personalities of the children propel the narrative. They work and learn, producing photographs impressive enough to be auctioned at Sotheby's in New York. So why are these capable and bright children any different than other children in Calcutta? Briski visits office after office in Calcutta, trying to secure the papers needed to get the kids into school. She then visits school after school that will not accept them because they are children of sex workers.

Born into Brothels beautifully portrays a hopeful social project, while deftly celebrating the children's photography and their artistic journey without glorifying Briski's efforts. The dispassionate norms of a fact-filled, hard-hitting documentary are thrown out to create an emotionally moving experience.

The success of *Born Into Brothels* led to the creation of *Kids With Cameras*, a foundation that has started additional projects in Haiti, Palestine and Cairo. Information about *Kids With Cameras* and upcoming screenings of *Born into Brothels* can be found at <http://kids-with-cameras.org>.

—CAITLIN BENEDETTO



A Gap in Consciousness

BY NICHOLAS POWERS

Why are clothing labels and the list of ingredients on food products the most-needed information and the most hidden? In a glitzy Gap store on 34th Street, I watched customers shimmy to disco music and pose in front of a Sarah Jessica Parker poster. It was as if the *Sex in the City* crowd came to buy winter accessories straight from the wardrobe room of their favorite show. While waiting in line, I looked at the labels to see their origins. Almost all tags read, "Made in China." I read label after label and began to wonder, is Christmas made in China?

The more I looked the more I realized globalization was not only in the names of the nations but the tinyess of their print. We are not meant to see the source of labor; it is a shameful fact that if witnessed would expose a grim factory and rob the clothing of its allure. It was as if I took the poster of Sarah Jessica Parker down and hidden behind was a sweatshop filled with swollen-eyed workers who assemble the coats and pants we had in our arms.

We do not see the production process, only the product presentation. In the gap between how something is made and why we buy it is a silence exploited by the ruling elite. Labels are evidence that clothes do not come from celebrity closets. Why is this important? Our nation's outsourcing of jobs causes economic anxiety that corporations conceal under ads. Labels are the last connective tissue to the truth of labor.

In psychoanalysis, labels are defined as a compromise formation, the form taken by a truth distorted by denial into an acceptable sign. Consumer safety groups struggled to get ingredients listed on food labels in order to protect us from cancer-causing chemicals. What if we applied this logic everywhere and honestly labeled every object? On milk cartons we would see farmers injecting cows with drugs. On clothes we would see faces of workers, their hours and wages. On gas pumps we would see car bombs and dead civilians.

As I left the Gap, a classic disco song, "Love Train" by the O'Jays sang out "People of the world, join hands, get on the love train." I thought of a love chain, hand holding hand that reached through the Sarah Jessica Parker poster to the sweatshops behind it. If we pulled the workers from their sewing machines into the store, how would they rewrite the labels on our clothes?

THE BREAD AND PUPPET THEATER: a political theater troupe founded in the East Village in 1963 and based in Glover, Vermont, since 1974, performed at the Theater for the New City earlier this month. In this scene, from "Daughter Courage," a show about International Solidarity Movement activist Rachel Corrie, who was killed at the age of 23 as she tried to stop a bulldozer from destroying a home, politicians silently incite war, symbolized by a bomb.

ARI EDELKIND





DAVID GOCHFIELD

COMMUNITY CALENDAR DECEMBER-JANUARY

THE INDYPENDENT has open meetings every Tuesday at 7p.m. at 34 E. 29th St., 2nd floor.

ENTIRE MONTH OF DECEMBER

ANNUAL NEW YORK CARES COAT DRIVE
New York Cares hopes to collect and distribute 70,000 warm winter coats. Please help out and drop off a coat at: NYC Police Department Precincts, Participating Washington Mutual Branches and Janovic Plaza Store. Also, from 7:30am - 9:30am at New York Penn Station, Grand Central Terminal, & NY Port Authority Bus Terminal. 212-402-1173 or www.nycares.org

THU DEC 23

2 - 7 p.m. • Free
FEED THE NEEDY
Serve dinner to members of our community who are in need in this holiday season. Carroll Street Building Cafeteria, 1150 Carroll Street

FRI DEC 24

10 p.m. • Free
HANNUKAH HOTTIES
A classic burlesque review of all Jewish women, all of whom know exactly what it takes to get your Jew on... and off! Featuring Dottie Lux from Red Hots Burlesque and Darlinda Just Darlinda. Chinese menus will be available for take out delivery. Galapagos Art Space, 70 N 6th St. (b/w Kent & Wythe), Bklyn www.galapagosartspace.com or (718) 782-5188

SUN DEC 26

10 p.m. • Free
HANG THE DJ
Every Sunday in December unleash your inner DJ and spin whatever you want. Sick of DJs playing crap you don't want to hear? Want to mix the Misfits into Martika? Beethoven into Bel Biv DeVoe? fine by them! Provided: 2 turntables and 2 CD decks for you to play whatever you feel like. Great prizes from Vice Records, Methods Clothing and Filter given out to best DJ of the night. Presented by Mr Samuel Fancy & Robert L. Johnson. The Knitting Factory, 74 Leonard St. www.knittingfactory.com or (212) 219-3132

MON DEC 27

7 p.m. • Free
IDEA POTLUCK
In U.S. post-election milieu, escaping from America is being discussed half-heartedly. But with no "outside" in which to flee, what does escape mean? How might exodus as a mode of resistance be practiced in world that

is 'borderless'? 'Potluck' refers not to food but to a smorgasbord of ideas. We invite all to present responses to the above questions to come with a prepared 3-5 minute presentation, and hope that all will participate in the open discussion that will follow. Bluestockings, 172 Allen St. www.bluestockings.com

WED DEC 29

7 p.m. • \$8
URB ALT FEATURING MUTHA WIT
A funk/soul mind trip and multimedia extravaganza. Galapagos Art Space, 70 N 6th St. (b/w Kent & Wythe), Bklyn www.galapagosartspace.com or (718) 782-5188

8 p.m. - 9:45 p.m. • \$6
DANIEL JOSE CUSTODIO'S BRAZILIAN BOOK AND MUSIC PARTY

Guarana Poet: The Taste of Truth, is comprised of 33 poems that will spark the dwindling flame of revolution in our society. His poems will take you on a trip across the world, from Brazil to Afghanistan to the streets of New York's ghettos, revealing the

injustices of imperialism and beckoning your conscience to join the revolution for a free world - one where our politicians are forced to meet our demands for reform. Bowers Poetry Club, 308 Bowers www.bowerspoetry.com

THU DEC 30

6 p.m. - 8:45 p.m. • Free
B-BOY/B-GIRL CLASSES EVERY THURSDAY
Learn break dancing, popping, locking and uprocking from old School and new school instructors. Classes will be given by Break Easy, King UpRock and Tiny Love. Boxing class is also available. Spaces are limited. I.S. 93, 66-56 Forest ave in Ridgewood, Queens. L to Myrtle and Wycoff; transfer to M to Forest Ave. Walk 1 block. (718) 456-KIDS

FRI DEC 31

7 p.m. • Free
CRITICAL MASS - THE NEW YEAR'S RIDE
Come ride or support NYC's biggest bike event. Meet at the North side of Union Square. www.times-up.org

THE INDYPENDENT will hold an intensive, three-part REPORTING WORKSHOP DURING JANUARY

Award-winning community journalists from *The Independent* and producers from Democracy Now! will be among the teachers. Limited positions available. To receive an application, email workshop@indypendent.org or call 212-684-8112.

8:30-10:20 p.m. • Free
POST CRITICAL MASS, PRE NEW YEARS PARTY
HOT COCOA AND DJS AT TIME'S UP.
49 E Houston St. www.times-up.org

SAT JAN 1
2 p.m.-3 a.m. • \$16
31ST ANNUAL NEW YEAR'S DAY MARATHON READING
To benefit the Poetry Project. A day of down-

town poetry, dance, music and multimedia. Featuring over 150 performers, including Penny Arcade, Eric Bogosian, Philip Glass, Tuli Kupferberg and Patti Smith. St. Mark's Church, 131 E. 10th St. www.poetryproject.com

9 p.m. • Free
MATTHEW IDES JAZZ-FUNK DUO
Vox Pop: Books, Coffee, Democracy
1022 Cortelyou Rd., Ditmas Park, Flatbush, Bklyn www.voxpopnet.net

SAT JAN 8
10:30 p.m. • \$15
THE BEST SEX OF THE XX CENTURY SALE
A satirical musical comedy review; a mock auction of sexual memorabilia circa 1900-2000. It covers the sexual icons, movements and many of the scientific breakthroughs that have affected our sexual lives. Written by Lissa Moira and Richard West. Theater for the New City, 155 1st Ave. b/w 9 & 10 Sts. www.lissamoira.com

TUES JAN 11
8 p.m. - 12 a.m. • Free
REALITY CHECK RECORDS ALBUM RELEASE PARTY
You've read recently in THE INDY how underground hip-hop artist, U.S., pushes the boundaries of hip-hop and drives the Movement with his latest album, THE NECESSARY EVIL. Now come cop the album and see for yourself! The Delancey, 168 Delancey St. @ Clinton St. www.usmc.tv or (347) 661-8879

6 p.m. • Free
OPEN HOUSE
NYC Indymedia will host an open house at our office on 34 E29th Street. Reps from our print, video, web, & tech working groups will be on hand to answer questions. Don't hate the media, become the media!

E-mail events to:
indymediaevents@yahoo.com

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