WHAT IS INDYMEDIA? With autonomous chapters in more than 150 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 progressing, progressive, k- and accurate coverage of issues. We are a community-based organization using media to facilitate political and cultural self-representation. We seek to analyze and accurate coverage of issues. We are the deadly months of the war since the invasion, it’s impossible to overstate the urgency of this task. The Indypendent is funded by 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 and distribute for the independent, video tapes and rallies, update the website, self-publish articles to the world, take photos or just help 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.

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

FRI NOV 3
7pm • 5$ • W/ROBERTO RODRIGUEZ “CLINT LIBERATION.” W/Dorothy Collective in a playful workshop w/rap and show & discussion of how abortion struggles are linked to all other struggles, including battles for racial justice & gender liberation; reproductive parts & functions: w/clinic abolition; and herbal alternatives. Backstage • 172 Alan St. • 212-777-0628 • wislawa@kindred.com
7:30pm • 5$ MUSIC/DISCUSION: “FOLK THE VOTE! AN EVENING OF PROTEST SONG & POLITICAL ACTION.” W/Flames of Discontent, Dave Lipman (political activist), Voices for Peace, Redwood Moose, Jay Weir (WV It will recently arrested for counter-recruitment protesting in Kingston). Backstage Studio Productions (BSP), 323 2nd St, Wall St, Brooklyn, 845-3368/700.

SAT NOV 4
noon-4pm • Free MARCH/RALLY: BROOKLYN MARK FOR CHILDREN. Bring attention to the needs of the children in the Bronx, the poorest urban city in the nation. Meet at St. Margaret’s Episcopal Church, 940 E 150th St. at Alby St. Bronx; ends at the Bronx Courthouse, Grand Concourse & 161st St. • (212)605-9773
Rpm • $12 $6 members. SUP. Sect.: SATURDAY WITH DAVE LIPPMAN: COMPELLING SONGS FROM JOHN FLYNN. People’s Voice Cafe, The Worker’s Circle, 45 E 2nd St. • 212-777-3902 peoplevoicescafe@verizon.net

SUN NOV 5
4:50-5:30pm • Free ACTION: HOUSE PARTY FOR VOT- ING RIGHTS. Come and write letters to the Westchester Election Commissioners and ask them to pro- test the vote by choosing a machine w/an independent paper ballot. Drinks & snacks. 111 Campti Road, Chappaqua, NY 10514. 914-238-6730
MON NOV 6

WED NOV 8
7pm • Free READING: “PARADOX WARS: INDIGENOUS PEOPLE’S RESIS- TANCE TO GLOBALIZATION.” W/Verity Mander (speaker). IMI Forum on Globalization & Victoria Taul-Coapui (Selk’nam) Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues Backstage • 172 Alan St. • 212-777-0628 • wislawa@kindred.com
THU NOV 9
7:30pm • Free TALK: “THE ROLE OF INDEPENDENT MEDIA IN TIMES OF ELECTION & WAR.” w/AMY GOODMAN. Judaism Memorial Church • Washington Sq. South. • 212-741- 2984 • www.jm.org.

FRI NOV 10
4:30pm • Free POST ELECTION MEXICO: “SOLIDARITY, DEMOCRACY & REFORM.” w/Christopher Sabatini (electrical worker), Laura Randall (Hunter College). CUNY Great Neck • Rm. 1200/C203, 365 59th Ave. • RSVP at 212-817-2099.

THU NOV 16
10pm • Free DISCUSSION: “JOICES IN WAR: THE ARTISTS’ PERSPECTIVE.” For members of the School of Visual Arts community & Veterans for Peace & their families. School of Visual Arts, 209 E 23 St. • 502

THU NOV 17
7pm • Free DISCUSSION: SOLDIERS WHO DESERTED THE WAR. How civilian antiwar activists can support and catalyze acts of desertion within the military. Now, in one of the most desperate months of the war since the invasion, it’s impossible to overstate the urgency of this talk. Judaism Church • 55 Washington Sq. South. RSVP: contact@militarypro- tect.org

THU NOV 23
noon – 7pm • Free ACTION: 37TH NATIONAL DAY OF MOURNING. Join Native activists, learn the real history of Thanksgiving, dedicate the day to Native American political prisoner Leonard Peltier. Como’s Hill, Plymouth, MA • Buses from NYC to Central Station w/Christina Press, 212-633-5046 • sonny@champnetwork.org, www.champ- network.org

THU NOV 30
7pm • 5$ suggested • 2nd PLACE BEST ARTIST ON LABOR ISSUES, Andrew Stern. 3rd Place Best Photo Essay Sarah Stuteville: Honorable Mention Best Article on Immigrant Issues/Racial or Social Justice Publishing since 2000, The Independent is a not-for-profit, volunteer-based, collectively-run newspaper. Weekly open meetings are held Tuesdays at 7 pm at our office at 4 W. 43rd St., Rm. 311.

THE INDYPEOPLE WERE
Sarah Stuteville: 1st Place Best Feature Chloe Tribich: 2nd Place Best Editorial/Commentary Erin Thompson: 2nd Place Best Article on Labor Issues Peter Holderness: 2nd Place Best Photograph Ryan Dunnmur: 2nd Place Best Overall Design Bennet Baurman: 3rd Place Best Artist on Labor Issues Andrew Stern: 3rd Place Best Photo Essay Sarah Stuteville: Honorable Mention Best Article on Immigration Issues/Racial or Social Justice

THE INDYPEople 8 “Ippies” Oct. 27 at the Independent Press Association of New York’s annual awards dinner, the most any paper in the city for the third consecutive year.

NOTE: THE INDYPENDENT CALL RETURN TO ITS WEEKLY PUBLISHING SCHEDULE IN JANUARY.
COUNTER-RECRUITING: Turn On, Tune In, Opt Out

BY DAVID FERRIS

A month after Columbia University students unexpectedly shut down a speech by the anti-immigrant Minuteman Project on Oct. 4, the incident continues to draw waves of both criticism and support from across the country, adding fuel to the growing political clash regarding racism and U.S. immigration policies.

Columbia’s College Republicans invited Minuteman Project co-founder Jim Gilchrist to address a campus audience. The controversy over Gilchrist’s appearance swirled in the weeks leading up to the event, culminating in the disruption of his speech by students who jumped on stage and unfurled a banner reading “No one is illegal.” The act prompted a tug-of-war over the banner and a physical altercation, which within minutes, resulted in the cancellation of the rest of the event. Students have been strongly criticized for violating the free speech rights of the invited guests, although video evidence indicates that the protesters were not responsible for the violence.

The stage-runners never called for the Minutemen to be banned from speaking at the university. “It’s not about what they’re saying, it’s what they’re doing,” said Karina Garcia, political chair of the Chicano Caucus at Columbia and one of the protest organizers. “We don’t have to wait until there are thousands of them on the border to realize they’re dangerous.”

Columbia has received significant outside pressure to punish the students severely and has delivered official letters to several students involved in the protest indicating that it may bring disciplinary charges against them. New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg has openly questioned Columbia President Lee Bollinger on his commitment to the First Amendment and Gilchrist has threatened to file a lawsuit for alleged civil rights violations.

The intense press coverage has also provided an outpouring of support from students across the country and represents the potential for a national student movement against the Minutemen in particular and for immigrant rights in general. “Regardless of how the media has vilified us, this is an opportunity to expose them,” said Garcia, who received thousands of letters of support after Gilchrist abruptly walked out of a nationally broadcast debate with her on Democracy Now!
The Vigil

South Bronx Resists New Jail

BY DAVID FERRIS

Plans for a new South Bronx prison to replace old facilities on Rikers Island has sparked resistance from a community that does not want a jail built in its backyard, or anywhere else in New York City.

Although the prison plans are still in the preliminary stages, community activists in Hunts Point, where the jail is to be built, are already mobilizing to dissuade the NYC Department of Corrections from the project. A boisterous Oct. 23 town hall meeting hinted at the potential heated conflict that may arise over the issue.

Residents and local activists were unperturbed in their opposition to the new facility, ending the meeting with chants of “No more jails!”

The resistance is being headed by Community in Unity, a coalition of fifteen Bronx community organisations, that is demanding transparency and accountability in the planning process and alternatives to the proposed 2,000-bed facility. “From day one, the city has not been forthcoming,” said Lezah Gitzer of Rights for Imprisoned People with Psychiatric Disabilities (RIPPD). “The City wants to spend taxpayer money to build a jail in our own backyard, but they haven’t told us a thing about it.”

NYC Department of Corrections Commissioner Martin Horn insisted that the City and the Department have remained committed to public openness. “We have tried to be transparent,” Horn said. He added that he had previously met with elected officials and Bronx organisations, prompting murmurs of skepticism from some of those in attendance.

Many in attendance strongly questioned the societal value of building another jail. The Department of Corrections insisted that a new jail is needed to replace aging facilities on Rikers Island, and has preliminarily budgeted $375 million for a new facility to be constructed on a 28-acre Oak Point site in the Hunts Point neighborhood.

Horns argued that the Rikers Island buildings are severely outdated and, due to their two levels of security checkpoints and inconvenient location, make prisoners less accessible to visitors, attorneys, and community support providers. He added that the plan would ultimately reduce city jail capacity by 2,000 beds, a fact that Maggie Wiener of Critical Resistance, who was marching after she confronted him with a document publicly released by his own department. She noted that many of the existing beds in city jails have already been de-commisioned and are unused.

Attorneys added that the new prison represented a positive step for criminal justice in the city, as it would foster inmates’ contact with the community, the position found little support amongst residents who claim much less faith in the prison system. Some residents stated that resistance is not a “Not in my backyard” movement, but rather a “Not in anyone’s backyard movement.”

Hunts Point resident Rodrigo “Rodstarz” Venegas, a 25-year-old activist and hip-hop artist, said he is against any new prison. “I’m well aware that my age group – 25-year-old activist and hip-hop artist, said he is against any new prison. “I’m well aware that my age group –

BY ULA KURAS

Stretching along the north end of Washington Square Park is the scene of a massive car wreck, part of a set for an upcoming Will Smith film. Standing among the throngs of onlookers is Jim Klicker and Eleanor Press in their designated spot under the arch, hold an anti-Iraq war placard, with quiet resolution.

“This isn’t going to change policy but it affects people’s mentality. I never wanted to show up. This is a good use of my time – a better use of my time,” Klicker said.

“Something happened there and he couldn’t talk about it without choking,” Klicker said. “He suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder. He walked through the streets of Brooklyn because he couldn’t sleep. His vision of the war had completely changed. Eleanor Press of Brooklyn Parents for Peace has attended the vigil every other night since its onset. “I’m super consistent during the winter and reasonably good during the fall and spring. It seems more important in the winter; it’s more meaningful to be a little in the winter,” Press said.

According to a study published on October 11 by public health scientists at Johns Hopkins and the University of Baghdad, more than 600,000 Iraqis (including both civilians and insurgents) have died as a result of the war, which translates to 2.5 percent of the population. This study yielded widely divergent results from the Iraq Body Count, a volunteer-run organization that tallies civilian deaths based on news media sources, which currently numbers civilian deaths at approximately 45,000.

Klicker has no intention of abandoning the vigil until the completion of the war. “I’m not going to change policy but it affects people’s mentality. I never wanted to show up. This is a good use of my time – a better use of my time,” Klicker said.

WHERE DO I GET MY COPY OF THE INDYPENDENT?

A FREE PAPER FOR FREE PEOPLE

BELOW 14TH ST.
Bluestockings Books & Cafe
172 Allen St.
Lexus Cafe
Clint & Stanton Sts.
May Day Books
Tha New City
150 First Ave.
May Day Books
Tha New City
150 First Ave.
Queens Library
137th St.
Staten Island
500 Turnpike Ave.
Syracuse Library
430 W. Genesee St.
Brooklyn
1418 Nostrand Ave.
Greenpoint
38-06 Metropolitan Ave.
Queens
111-05 Northern Blvd.
Brooklyn
1490 Vanderbilt Ave.
BROOKLYN
30 Lafayette Ave.
Vogentown
225 Lafayette Ave.
Syracuse
200-00 48th St.
Syracuse
1443 Genesee St.
Make the Road New York
619 Grand Ave.
BROOKLYN
361 Grand St.
Westchester
940 Garrison Ave.
Queens
1443 Genesee St.
Union St. @ 7th Ave.
7th Ave. @ 6th Ave.
55th St. & 9th Ave.
Second Wave
181st St. @ Cabrini
Revolution Books
20th St.
Dane's Bar
3rd St.
Book Store
1443 Genesee St.
Food for Thought
456 Northard Ave.
BAM
33-01 78th St.
Lincoln Center
235 W. 65th St.
Pace
208-00 78th St.
940 Garrison Ave.
7th Ave. @ 6th Ave.
Browns Museum
1635 St. & Grand Concourse
JERSEY CITY
Lewis Morris Library
1700 Communipaw Ave.
The Point
1460 Raymond Ave.
Queens
1443 Genesee St.
BARNES & NOBLE
Union St. @ 8th Ave.
Harlem
125th St.
Barnes & Noble
155 W. 14th St.
LGBT Center
213 W. 13th St.
Shakespeare & Co.
28 W. 18th St.
Bryant Park
11th Ave. @ 23rd St.
Waldenbooks
360 W. 27th St.
Emerson Library
67th Ave. Bethpage
55th St. & 9th Ave.
JERSEY CITY
Lewis Morris Library
1700 Communipaw Ave.
The Point
1460 Raymond Ave.
Queens
1443 Genesee St.
Local 100 Washes Its Laundry

BY BENNETT BAUMER

T

Unions Workers Union (TWU Local 100) washes their “laundry outside in public even before it’s dirty” — so says Local 100 president Roger Toussaint, alluding to his adversaries’ sniping as the upcoming union election. Toussaint is facing a barrage of attacks from the right and left flank of his union, as the union’s election turns into a referendum on last December’s strike and Toussaint’s leadership style.

Toussaint is running for re-election as the president of Local 100 on his decision to lead 16,000 willing transportation workers off the job in December 2005. Few in the mayor and governor’s offices, Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) and even the union itself thought there would be a strike. Not in this age of factory closings, disappearing pensions and soaring health care costs. But TWU Local 100 took a stand.

At a recent forum on the strike, the union’s internal squabbles were on full display. Marty Goodman, a Vice President in the union, took the mic to berate union leadership for supporting Eliot Spitzer’s gubernatorial campaign and not getting a contract out of the strike. Goodman, a socialist, organized against the contract that the union first voted down by 7 votes and then ratified overwhelmingly months later. He contends the union demanded too little from the MTA and should have held out and try and oust him from leadership.

Strange Bedfellows

At first glance, Goodman and Josephson appear to be what the labor movement needs: principled rabble-rousers not afraid to take on union leadership and the MTA, but a closer look reveals contradictions. For all his radical rhetoric, Goodman allied himself against the contract with a far more conservative, Amilie Stewart, who voted against the strike, and John Mooney, an Independence party leader and supporter of Mayor Michael Bloomberg. Running for the local’s executive board as an independent, Goodman referred to Stewart and Mooney as “beautiful boys, but I do have my disagreements.”

The Revolutionary Transit Worker is oppositional for opposition’s sake. The newsletter muddles its revolutionary line criticizing Toussaint for his leadership during the strike but is then “prepared to cooperate against the bosses” with TWU leaders like Barry Roberts who were against striking, leaving TWU members with no viable leadership choices.

Toussaint’s other challengers include union vice president Ainsley Stewart and Barry Roberts who vacillate on their positions on the strike and contract. Both Stewart and Roberts voted against going on strike and are inconsistent in their support and opposition for the contract. A little-known independent candidate is also running.

“I wasn’t against the strike, but I voted against the strike,” said Stewart. He then said that, if elected, he would “mobilize the members for a strike” in order to obtain a fair contract. Though he was short on specifics, Stewart supported Republicans, he criticized Toussaint for his support of recent Democratic candidates for mayor (Freddy Ferrer) and governor (Carl McCall).

On the second day of the strike, Barry Roberts and 22 other officials of the Local 100’s, 6,000-member bus division signed a petition favoring a quick resolution with the MTA. The bus division in Manhattan and Bronx entered the TWU and MTA in the 1960s and at times has seen itself as different from the rest of transit workers. The petition concluded that the strikers’ resolve is starting to wear thin, “constraining daily reports of bus operators picking lines in the cold week before Christmas. But only Roberts and his cohorts had cold feet. In the Sept. 28 Amsterdam News, Roberts flip-flopped and said ending the strike was a “grave error” that “destroyed the workers’ morale.” Roberts is the favored candidate of former TWU International presidents Sonny Hall and Michael O’Brien, both long opposed to Local 100 militancy. Though leaders from both other unions were reluctant to enter into the trenches with Toussaint, the current TWU president O’Brien was the only national labor official to openly advocate for Local 100 members to break the strike and scabs their own union.

“The MTA wants one lesson to be taught — striking is bad,” said John Paul, a bus operator at Jackie Gleason Depot in Brooklyn, who is running to chair the Brooklyn bus division.

BY BENNETT BAUMER

To the left of Goodman is the Trotskyite socialist Solidarity union movement. The TWU as a track cleaner a decade later. In his book, “Free Education Means Free Books.” Though he stopped short of saying he would “mobilize the membership” on behalf of the MTA bus division but he has partnered with former Toussaint ally, John Samuelson, who was angered over being booted from his leadership views him as though he’s from “another planet.”

Juan Gonzalez, and distrusts the “spin out of the union hall by high priced P.R. officials.” Goodman says union leaders are not fighting the system even before it’s dirty” — so says Marty Goodman of union leadership.

Toussaint’s leadership style is also in sharp focus. Toussaint’s enemies do not hold back their anger and disgust, and the personal is very much the political. If Toussaint wins, his influence over the local will be cemented, but Toussaint’s enemy may also reach into the ever-advancing international TWU as well.

Eric Josephson

Eric Josephson with his paper, Revolutionary Transit Worker Josephson has a platform, but no real base within the union. “[Toussaint] struck, he went to jail, and now he’s supporting that no good son of a bitch Spitzer.”

Ainsley Stewart & John Mooney

They made a name for themselves in the Vote No campaign against the contract and are seen as close to socialist Marty Goodman. Stewart’s problem: the membership may remember he voted against going on strike and his contradictory positions. “I didn’t trust Toussaint coming back without a contract.”

Marty Goodman

Marty Goodman feels purged from Toussaint’s camp and rails against progressive support of Toussaint, such as Juan Gonzalez, and distrusts the “spin out of the union hall by high priced P.R. officials.” Goodman says union leadership views him as though he’s from “another planet.”

Barry Roberts

He has partnered with former Toussaint ally, John Samuelson, who was angered over being booted from his staff job. Roberts may mount the toughest competition to Toussaint, though his role in the petition to end the strike will come on the agenda of many transit workers.
World briefs

THOUSANDS OF U.S. WEAPONS MISSING IN IRAQ
Almost one in 25 weapons the U.S. provided to Iraq security forces since 2003 are considered missing, according to a new U.S. Inspector General report released to Congress. The Associated Press reports that this amounts to more than 14,000 semi-automatic pistols, assault rifles, rocket-propelled grenade launchers and other weapons it began supplying to Iraq since the end of 2003. The report was requested by Sen. John Warner (R-Va.), the chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee. The Pentagon acknowledged that it failed to register the serial numbers of approximately 360,000 weapons sent to Iraq.

MIAMI RESIDENTS TAKE OVER URBAN PUBLIC LAND
In response to a critical shortage of affordable housing in Miami, Florida, a group of organization and individuals took control of city and county-owned land for the benefit of the people on Oct. 23, reported the Miami Independent Media Center. The “Take Back the Land” movement, convened by the Center for Pan-African Development, took control of vacant land on the corner of 17th Ave. NW and 82nd St. NW in the Liberty City section without authorization. After a brief standoff with the Miami Police Department, officials acknowledged that the land was public and left. In the days following the land take-over, a “shanty town” was built. The Miami Community Relations Board (CRB) met with the group on Oct. 26 about several concerns, including that the “shanty town” was unsafe. Community members responded that the “shanty town” was safer than the nearby dilapidated apartment complexes. The group pledged not to let the government take back the property.

NEW YORK CITY
A judge issued a preliminary injunction barring the implementation of a bill sponsored by Gov. George Pataki to require formerly homeless individuals to enter homeless shelters near the coastal city of Heredia, Costa Rica.

COSTA RICA
The bill would hit the pocketbooks of some 2,200 HIV/AIDS patients receiving city housing subsidies and individuals taking prescribed medications at the end of the year, according to a new U.S. Inspector General report released to Congress. The Associated Press reports that this amounts to more than 14,000 semi-automatic pistols, assault rifles, rocket-propelled grenade launchers and other weapons it began supplying to Iraq since the end of 2003. The report was requested by Sen. John Warner (R-Va.), the chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee. The Pentagon acknowledged that it failed to register the serial numbers of approximately 360,000 weapons sent to Iraq.

LOS ANGELES
Renters organized by the housing organization Strategic Actions for a Just Economy sued a slumlord for conditions ranging from rat and cockroach infestations to dilapidated water pipes. The suit asks that the judge order the landlord to reside in the building to experience the poor conditions.

COSTA RICA
Government authorities bulldozed homes and left 67 families with no place to stay at night. Most of the residents of La Esperanza slum were Nicaraguan immigrants seeking better economic conditions.

MEXICO
According to the National Union of Education Workers, teachers uniformly occupying the historic town square every year since 1990 in their struggle to bring greater federal and state funds to meet the education needs of one of the poorest states in the country. On June 14, for the first time in the 26-year history of the teacher’s movement, recently elected (and imprisoned, depending upon whom you ask) Governor Ulises Ruiz Ortiz began “softening up” protest barricades with the kind of hit-and-run attacks that would later claim the life of NYC Independent journalist Brad Will. In an early prophetic dispatch submitted to The Indypendent on the day before Will’s murder, Gólib recounts an earlier experience he had with the police: “I was told that it was impossible to try to see the violent no-men’s land that Oaxaca’s captived city had become.

OAXACA DE JUAREZ, MEXICO—On Aug. 22, I came to the Fiesta Inn on the outskirts of Oaxaca on to catch a ride with the national press corps as they wound about the city looking for the death squads. The national reporters from Mexico City were all staying here as well as a local reporter with connections to the police chief.

These reporters knew the scene. They have the cars, and they have the serious cameras. At night my little camera is useless. The local reporter sitting next to me was working for a young hologram journalist from one of the main national newspapers in Mexico City. This reporter, call him Rodrigo, went upstairs to his room to charge his cell phone and left me and the local correspondent, call him Andres, at the restaurant with an open tab. Andres refused to eat—he was on the receiving end of a club recently and had the taste of pain still on his tongue. He couldn’t sit still, couldn’t settle his gaze for more than a moment. He was smoking. He looked constantly up to the screen, around the room, out to the doors. He held two cellular phones, one in each hand. He knew what was going to happen; they told him.

TOO MANY WEAPONS MISSING IN IRAQ
Almost one in 25 weapons the U.S. provided to Iraq security forces since 2003 are considered missing, according to a new U.S. Inspector General report released to Congress. The Associated Press reports that this amounts to more than 14,000 semi-automatic pistols, assault rifles, rocket-propelled grenade launchers and other weapons it began supplying to Iraq since the end of 2003. The report was requested by Sen. John Warner (R-Va.), the chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee. The Pentagon acknowledged that it failed to register the serial numbers of approximately 360,000 weapons sent to Iraq.

JOHN GUBLER
The rumors had already run through most of downtown. The colonial cobblestone
Death Squads

Death Squads do little to uproot such a thrashing. APPO issued a formal apology, but apologies forward to call them back. Andres was taken club. Andres fell; people from the crowd dentials. Someone shouted: “he’s a cop!” questions without presenting his press cre-
had threatened the family of one of the APPO jokes, but I could not shake the distrust. A spent much time around him. He is a gregar-
heard rumors early on that Andres had
“Don’t you feel scared?” Andres asked me out “Not me,” Andres said. “I don’t want to

But tonight, Andres has been told, there will be no holding back. And these were the people who would come that night. But tonight, Andres has been told, there will be no holding back. Andres called the waiter over and ordered a tree in the parking lot just beyond the

We ordered nothing.

Andres has been told, there will be no holding back.

We didn’t know what they would show. They showed the convoy of police and gun-
mowed untidily cades across the city to stop the convoy, with hundreds of barricades interrupting inter-

The images were damning: this was a death squad. And these were the people who would come that night.

How do you mourn a million deaths?

H uman beings are all too adept at cataloguing and quantifying mass murder, but we are inca-

continued on page 14

The Monster at Our Door

How do you mourn a million deaths?

by a parasite on this operation, sitting there wait-

Looking at the photos of the nearly 3,000 dead. The same technique is used to bring home the cost in American lives of the Iraq War, in the traveling “Eyes Wide Open” exhibit: A pair of combat boots is laid out for each U.S. death to date. The Diary of Anne Frank made real the 11 million deaths of the Holocaust. One of the most affecting displays in the Holocaust Museum is the room with a jumble of shoes. It allows us to grasp the enormity of the murder when we see thousands of pairs of shoes, each taken from a unique life, itself just a frac-

The New York Times

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Mexican Paramilitaries Slay NYC Indymedia Journalist

Marc Soriano, Manuel Aguilar and Abel de la Garza, all linked to the paramilitary groups in Oaxaca, were identified as Pedro Carmona, Juan Carlos Hernandez and Santiago Zárate, all local police officers or government officials.

These officials obviously said the gunman were detained but it has since emerged that no one had been detained and that the men have disappeared.

Patrons are contact with the Oaxaca state government over Brad’s death and the ongoing repression in the state other than the Oaxaca State government.

In New York, friends of Brad Will held an emergency vigil outside the Mexican Consulate 24 hours after his death. Two days later, on October 30, more than 200 activists returned to blockade the consulate on Oct. 30 as the radar lights were switched on and citizens up the flag to try and stop a giant vigil being run in his honour.

FOREST DEFENSE – Freight hopping and timber driving back and forth across this country. Brad looks up to old-growth forest defenders everywhere. The fight to save the forests is an innovative and decentralised action technique including “tree-sitting” to blockaded logging roads. “tree-sitting.” Will often referred to the still sit in a busy circle of friends and family.

COMMUNITY GRANDMOTHERS – As Mother Guillermo moved to wipe out hundreds of community gardens across the US back in the late 90’s, Brad helped create the community gardens movement by introducing non-violent direct action techniques learned in the Pacific Northwest. The movement gained momentum and has since spread to other parts of the USA and has expanded to other parts of the world.

GLOBAL JUSTICE MOVEMENT – Brad traveled to Pakistan, Ceylon, City of Sin and Disturb among other locations to partake in major movements against corporate-dominated trade summits and international financial institutions. The World Social Forum and the International Forum for another world is always in progress. Brad continued to follow new paths and always called for a stronger, more united and more diverse global justice movement, especially in Latin America. When it’s in New York, he continues to actively participate in these movements and inspire new generations of radical social activists here in the United States.

INDIANA – inspired by the Zapatistas and launched the one of the Seattle WTO protests, Indymedia’s innovative self-publishing revolution has resulted in thousands of articles to become the mainstream. Local Indymedia Centers quickly pop up in other cities in order to continue the work. Brad became involved with the New York City chapter and contributes as a writer, photographer, videographer and online editor.

SOUTH AMERICA – Brad made his first visit to South America over the summer of 2000. Living on the outer edges of Buenos Aires, Argentina, he first met the popular movements, organisation and mobilizing through neighbourhood assemblies, factory occupations, commercial soup kitchens and more to resist colonial and neo-liberal forces from the world’s bottom. He visited the Zapatistas and was moved by their struggle and committed to supporting the Zapatistas. In February 2003, he was killed when Brazilian police violently arrested him while he was participating in a protest that occupied an abandoned industrial park for a few months.

GLOBAL WARRING – Brad played a leading role this summer in the protest against the G8 in Toronto. The demonstrations were supported by many groups and individuals organizing against the growing crises of capitalism.

MEXICO – In January 2000, Brad chronicled the first of the Zapatistas’ Ottawa Campaign, a national laborer that brings to theали the most prominent and most experienced movements in Mexico against the Internal Revenue Service and the National Insurance Fund. He was involved in some of the most active and dynamic political struggles in Mexico.

Brad Will was someone who seemed to be everywhere.

One more martyr in a dirty war – One more time to cry and hurt.”

BRAD WILL’S REMARKABLE LIFE

BY JOHN TARLETON

“T was reading the New York Times when I came across a note from an obscure NGO. It was about a group in Mexico. I clicked on the website and was instantly hooked.

For the next few weeks, I followed their work closely. I read every article, watched every video, listened to every audio file. I was amazed at what they were doing. They were doing something truly revolutionary. Something that I had never seen before.

I knew I had to get involved. So I started volunteering. I went to Mexico and worked with the NGO for several months. I learned so much. I learned about the power of the people. I learned about the importance of direct action.

I came back to the States determined to make a difference. I started organizing protests and demonstrations. I started writing articles and making videos. I started spreading the message.

And it worked. People started listening. People started getting involved. I was able to change things. I was able to make a difference.

I’m not saying that I’m a hero. I’m not saying that I’m a savior. I’m just saying that I didn’t give up. I didn’t give up on the dream. I didn’t give up on the hope.

And now, one of our own has been killed.

One more martyr in a dirty war – One more time to cry and hurt.”
“Here’s a story that you may not understand, but the parking lots will crack and bloom again.

There’s a world beneath the pavement that will never end.

Seeds are lying dormant, they will never end.”

—Songwriter Dana Lyons, “Willy Says”

England, used as ballast for the rough sea and stumbled on the docks in exchange for old-growth white pines. They became streets, then were ripped up and poured black. We tried to get them right. Getting your hands in the soil is such a simple and human thing. You are moving contrary to the concrete. You are moving contrary to the concrete. You are moving contrary to the concrete.

A crew of us went out to the Liz Christy gardens for the Green Guerrillas annual plant giveaway. In the 1970s, the Green Guerrillas formed a band of night-time raiders, kick-starting the gardening movement with bolt cutters, trainings on appropriate trespass tactics, “seed bombs,” direct support. Natural allies. We cleared house: a rickety wheelbarrow, shovels, dozens of plants and a compost bin. It took three trips to haul it away. We planted a row of bushes whose berries would attract birds and whose thorns doubled as security. We planted a pear tree for sweet Sammy the plumber who passed away. Never got to see it come to fruit.

When they came for our building there weren’t any eviction papers, and they came with a wreathing crane. I snuck inside, felt the numbness when the hall percussed the wall. I was alone. From the roof I watched them dump a rubble heap. And later, it got to see it come to fruit. Next day I was in his beautiful garden in an old squat. A gang of friends making music across a street during rush hour in the city—a remnant fortress dubbed “The Rock.” The kids with negligent parents were almost adopted by Agi, the garden saint. They didn’t understand when Don Garcia from Little Puerto Rico garden walked up to me on the stoop of a friend’s squat and offered to buy our beer. The next day I was in his beautiful garden in an old squat. A gang of friends making music across a street during rush hour in the city—a remnant fortress dubbed “The Rock.” The kids with negligent parents were almost adopted by Agi, the garden saint. They didn’t understand when Don Garcia from Little Puerto Rico garden walked up to me on the stoop of a friend’s squat and offered to buy our beer. The next day I was in his beautiful garden in an old squat. A gang of friends making music across a street during rush hour in the city—a remnant fortress dubbed “The Rock.” The kids with negligent parents were almost adopted by Agi, the garden saint. They didn’t understand when Don Garcia from Little Puerto Rico garden walked up to me on the stoop of a friend’s squat and offered to buy our beer. The next day I was in his beautiful garden in an old squat. A gang of friends making music across a street during rush hour in the city—a remnant fortress dubbed “The Rock.” The kids with negligent parents were almost adopted by Agi, the garden saint. They didn’t understand when Don Garcia from Little Puerto Rico garden walked up to me on the stoop of a friend’s squat and offered to buy our beer.

Rapid response. Activists chained themselves across a street during rush hour in front of the Manhattan Institute, the right-wing think tank that was the Frankenstein behind the Giuliani monster and shaped the neoliberal policy sweeping the city. NAFTA for the South Bronx, bringing all of the five boroughs under the thumb of Wall Street wizards, making nothing move. But then the bubble was yet to burst. People were making the connections. It was a non-profit shell game. They called them “blighted vacant lots.” Public-private partnership. And the spin was that they would be low-income housing, even though only 20 percent were lower than market rate, and only for ten years. After that they were sitting pretty. Every month more. And it is never enough.

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Chico Mendez Mural garden was a miracle. Neighbors dug in next to the most notorious crack house in the city—a remnant fortress dubbed “The Rock.” The kids with negligent parents were almost adopted by Agi, the garden saint. They didn’t understand when Don Garcia from Little Puerto Rico garden walked up to me on the stoop of a friend’s squat and offered to buy our beer. The next day I was in his beautiful garden in an old squat. A gang of friends making music across a street during rush hour in the city—a remnant fortress dubbed “The Rock.” The kids with negligent parents were almost adopted by Agi, the garden saint. They didn’t understand when Don Garcia from Little Puerto Rico garden walked up to me on the stoop of a friend’s squat and offered to buy our beer. The next day I was in his beautiful garden in an old squat. A gang of friends making music across a street during rush hour in the city—a remnant fortress dubbed “The Rock.” The kids with negligent parents were almost adopted by Agi, the garden saint. They didn’t understand when Don Garcia from Little Puerto Rico garden walked up to me on the stoop of a friend’s squat and offered to buy our beer. The next day I was in his beautiful garden in an old squat. A gang of friends making music across a street during rush hour in the city—a remnant fortress dubbed “The Rock.” The kids with negligent parents were almost adopted by Agi, the garden saint. They didn’t understand when Don Garcia from Little Puerto Rico garden walked up to me on the stoop of a friend’s squat and offered to buy our beer. The next day I was in his beautiful garden in an old squat. A gang of friends making music across a street during rush hour in the city—a remnant fortress dubbed “The Rock.” The kids with negligent parents were almost adopted by Agi, the garden saint. They didn’t understand when Don Garcia from Little Puerto Rico garden walked up to me on the stoop of a friend’s squat and offered to buy our beer.

The Angels’ garden had a little casita with old men playing dominos and drinking a bottle of rum. Maria’s garden had an intricate nyorican (Puerto Rican New Yorker) shrine. A moose called me as I biked past at the crack of dawn. All were destroyed one day before New Year’s 1999, when most were out of town. They were turned into government-subsidized condos. The developer, Donald Caprizza, showed up as the bulldozer finished off lovely Chico. About a dozen community members lunged with a valley of spit. The police turned the other way.

Talking democracy while walking to the hearings at City Hall. Whole classrooms coming downtown to tell the truth. We came dressed as flowers and bugs. My testimony was a song. Went to the gardens on their block to gather information for the court battle. Helped get the court actions moving. Sweet escalation. I stoke a kiss in the paddy wagon leaving city hall, and when they lined us up, boys versus girls, we did the hokey-pokey at the station house. The cops were impressed.

I stumbled out of jail, dazed-eyed at dawn, and stumbled to another rally to support the struggle. I drank a beer and invited him to the rest of it...dissidents. Getting your hands in the soil is such a simple and human thing. You are moving contrary to the concrete. You are moving contrary to the concrete. You are moving contrary to the concrete.

“Even in this city where the shadows seem victorious, Sunflowers stand tall and put all them to shame.”

—Songwriter Casey Neil, “Emma’s Garden”

In a green space between the towering dark projects in the South Bronx, the More Gardens Coalition was formed. Gardeners, squatters and young activists challenged the language of the struggle. Sharing food cooked over an open fire, we strategized a fresh mix of direct action (with puppets) and lobbying with love for the land. The smell of garlic, greens and tomatoes in an old squat. A gang of friends making puppets by candlelight. Standing in a circle for the unsettling. We were a new communica- tion element – not only protection, but extension of green space. We fought before the execution was imminent. We brought the gardeners together to decide for themselves what to do.

Testimonials and tributes poured into the nyc.indymedia.org website in the days following Brad Will’s death. Here are excerpts from a few of them.

by jenka

I haven’t seen Brad since I was last in new york...at a protest, of course. he was at every protest, big or small, he “had” to be there. when i met him, we were part of a small group that deter- mined to make new york indymedia a reality. we lived, breathed, sweated and often wept. most of our time was devoted to it...day and night, recording everything we could...the Joanna teller, warrior, justin, mattiebaby, ana, josh, brettalx, anu, lee...devoting ourselves with such fury that the idea that “all voices should be heard”, and Brad was just about the most devoted devotee to that idea, that vision. i hear his voice now, in my head, so matter-of-fact, so ready to face any force...but not to be a hero! no! just because (brad’s voice now), well, hey, there are people being oppressed, so...i got here, we’ve gotta stand and be there with them. of course we’ve gotta tell their story, capture their struggle on our cameras, broadcast their voices to the world. i mean, that’s what any reasonable person would do in such a circumstance.

by scott

I just saw Brad a few weeks ago. He came by my house at 3am that night after I’d begun working on my story. Hearing him tell me your story was unforseen, was uncharted territory. It would be low-income housing, even though only 20 percent were lower than market rate, and only for ten years. After that they were sitting pretty. Every month more. And it is never enough.

SOMETHING... INCREDIBLE! CHICAGO!

Chicago, illinois. The first thing i saw when brad agreed to tell his story was the sound of merengue charged the air. the next day I was in his beautiful garden in an old squat. A gang of friends making puppets by candlelight. Standing in a circle for the unsettling. We were a new communica- tion element – not only protection, but extension of green space. We fought before the execution was imminent. We brought the gardeners together to decide for themselves what to do.

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May 1999. Every garden on the auction pro-
tected. He should have known better.

EL JARDÍN DE LA ESPERANZA

There is a myth in Puerto Rico. A monster
approaches the forest intending to destroy
it. The tiny thumbnail-sized coqui tree frog
steps up and is able to scare away the monster
with the loudness of its voice. This was the
perfect analogy for a community facing off
with stencils and messages of hope.

THE COMMUNITY GARDENS OF NEW YORK CITY

THE INDYPENDENT

NOVEMBER 1–30, 2006

Compiled from nyc.indymedia.org.
When Forest Whitaker first appeared on the scene as Idi Amin I laughed to myself. I wondered how a Hollywood actor could tap into the emotional depths of a megalomaniacal genocidal dictator in postcolonial Uganda. I was surprised to learn that he had indeed accessed a giddy, manic evil that made his performance eerily reminiscent of Berlin in the late 1930s. It made me wonder if there was a giddy, maniacal evil that Idi Amin somehow managed to access a giddy, maniacal evil that made his performance enrol for your life Hollywood thriller suspense. He plays a believable, well-meaning, gin-sipping, blue-eyed devil. The poolside party scenes are the most talked about element of this film, Idi Amin's fictitious arrival in Africa is just one messed-up place. He brought into the glamorous life of some personal physician is the protagonist. This film, Idi Amin's fictitious performance is the most talked about element of this film, Idi Amin's fictitious personal physician is the protagonist. James McAvoy plays a clueless young Scotsman just out of medical school who literally spins a globe and chooses Uganda as a destination for his first assignment. At first the young man goes to a village ostensibly to help the poor, but he quickly befriends Idi Amin and is brought into the glamorous life of the richest of the rich in a country full of the poorest of the poor. He signs cocktails lounging in front of the pool, ogles beautiful women with scary 1970s eye shadow, and somehow convinces himself that Idi Amin is a true friend. He doesn't have a clue about African politics and, as a viewer, neither do you. The film reduces the incredibly complex political context to a few statistics and inner-circle political intrigue. It could leave you with the belief that 500,000 Ugandans were slaughtered because Africa is just one messed-up place. However, I believe that the writer intended just the opposite. McAvoy does a great job of bringing his character's inner anguish to the screen, along with the requisite run-as-you-live Hollywood thriller suspense. He plays a believable, well-meaning, gin-sipping, blue-eyed devil. The poolside party scenes are eerily reminiscent of Berlin in the late 1930s. It made me wonder if someday there will be similar films about us. Will movies show New Yorkers drinking $15 martinis as they are busy having a good time. This makes for some hilarious hijacked sequences that will be no surprise to fans of Da Ali G Show. But misogyny, anti-Semitism, class and race issues make frequent appearances, presented alongside some ingenious physical gags.

High society, ghetos and redos all receive Borat with different levels of enthusiasm. When Borat goes into a gun shop and asks, “Which gun would be best to shoot the Jews?” the man behind the counter doesn’t miss a beat, recommending a 9-mm handgun. It’s funny because Borat is fake, awful because the store owner’s response is real. Borat is not for those who are easily offended, but for audiences who enjoy lightening-forever with fire, the movie offers some of the sharpest satire in recent film. You’ll laugh, you’ll flinch, and you’ll wonder how so many people could say such humble things to an enthusiastic foreigner in a tattered grey suit. This is a great movie to see in theaters, not just for the experience of laughing wildly together with strangers, but also because, as Borat’s Myspace page declares, “Please you come see November 3. If movie not success, I will be execute.” Hard to argue with that, isn’t it?

—ERICA PATINO

BoOks

by James B. Jacobs

New York University Press

F rom Jimmy Hoffa to the building trades in New York City, the Mafia built its power base in the labor movement, using union funds and industry clout to fatten themselves at the workers’ expense. In Mobs, Unions, and Fad, NYU professor James Jacobs examines how RICO anti-racketeering laws and trustees of unions can turn corrupt unions into functioning bodies. While many romanticize the Cosa Nostra, Jacobs takes away that mystique with case histories of various unions in which workers always lose out. One of the most common racketeers are sweetheart deals between corrupt union officials and management. Here’s how it works: Mafia members or their associates in construction unions try to secretly enforce the contract and allow non-union workers to turn less on the job. The mobbed-up labor officials receive kickbacks and the bosses maximize profits by paying below the union standard. In other cases, the mob just robs health and pension funds as well as union coffers. The most famous case is Hoffa’s use of the Teamsters’ pension fund to build Vegas casinos in the 1950s and 70s. Union members are often fearful and powerless to confront entrenched Mafia leadership and thus Jacobs focuses on how the government can use the law to combat corruption. His focus on the legal aspects, however, reads more like a court document than mob exposé. Four international unions—the hotel union (HERE), Teamsters, Laborers and the International Longshoremen’s Association have undergone racketeering cases and court-appointed trustees that over-saw the union’s affairs and called new elections to eliminate corruption. However, the feds’ history in strike-breaking and greasing labor protections creates suspicions that too often lead union members back into the arms of corrupt lawyers. Jacobs notes these concerns, but does not give any labor history to explain workers’ suspicions. Jacobs is clearly a labor guy who believes that the best way to rid the mob from the labor movement is to use the law. Though Whitaker’s performance is the most talked about element of this film, Idi Amin’s fictitious personal physician is the protagonist. James McAvoy plays a clueless young Scotsman just out of medical school who literally spins a globe and chooses Uganda as a destination for his first assignment. At first the young man goes to a village ostensibly to help the poor, but he quickly befriends Idi Amin and is brought into the glamorous life of the richest of the rich in a country full of the poorest of the poor. He signs cocktails lounging in front of the pool, ogles beautiful women with scary 1970s eye shadow, and somehow convinces himself that Idi Amin is a true friend. He doesn’t have a clue about African politics and, as a viewer, neither do you. The film reduces the incredibly complex political context to a few statistics and inner-circle political intrigue. It could leave you with the belief that 500,000 Ugandans were slaughtered because Africa is just one messed-up place. However, I believe that the writer intended just the opposite. McAvoy does a great job of bringing his character’s inner anguish to the screen, along with the requisite run-as-you-live Hollywood thriller suspense. He plays a believable, well-meaning, gin-sipping, blue-eyed devil. The poolside party scenes are eerily reminiscent of Berlin in the late 1930s. It made me wonder if someday there will be similar films about us. Will movies show New Yorkers drinking $15 martinis as they are busy having a good time. This makes for some hilarious hijacked sequences that will be no surprise to fans of Da Ali G Show. But misogyny, anti-Semitism, class and race issues make frequent appearances, presented alongside some ingenious physical gags.

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—ERICA PATINO

Borat: Cultural Learnings of America for Make Benefit Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan
Directed by Larry Charles, starring Sacha Baron Cohen
Wide release date: November 3, 2006

The Fake is Real

Af ter ten years of various incarnations on British television and on HBO’s Da Ali G Show, Borat Sagdiyev, the lusty Kazakhstani television reporter, stars in his own feature film, Borat: Cultural Learnings of America for Make Benefit Glorious Nation of Kazakhs.

British comedian Sacha Baron Cohen gives us a scathing mockumentary as Borat and his plump producer Azamat go to the United States on assignment from the Kazakh Ministry of Information to “learn lessons” that will be useful to their home country. Once he gets to America, Borat discovers a new mission: driving cross-country in an ice cream truck to make Pamela Anderson his wife.

The best and worst thing about Borat is that most of the interactions are unstaged. This makes for some hilarious hijacked sequences that will be no surprise to fans of Da Ali G Show. But misogyny, anti-Semitism, class and race issues make frequent appearances, presented alongside some ingenious physical gags.

James Jacobs examines how RICO anti-racketeering laws and court-appointed trustees that oversaw the union’s affairs and called new elections to eliminate corruption. However, the feds’ history in strike-breaking and greasing labor protections creates suspicions that too often lead union members back into the arms of corrupt lawyers. Jacobs notes these concerns, but does not give any labor history to explain workers’ suspicions. Jacobs is clearly a labor guy who believes that the best way to rid the mob from the labor movement is to use the law. Though Whitaker’s performance is the most talked about element of this film, Idi Amin’s fictitious personal physician is the protagonist. James McAvoy plays a clueless young Scotsman just out of medical school who literally spins a globe and chooses Uganda as a destination for his first assignment. At first the young man goes to a village ostensibly to help the poor, but he quickly befriends Idi Amin and is brought into the glamorous life of the richest of the rich in a country full of the poorest of the poor. He signs cocktails lounging in front of the pool, ogles beautiful women with scary 1970s eye shadow, and somehow convinces himself that Idi Amin is a true friend. He doesn’t have a clue about African politics and, as a viewer, neither do you. The film reduces the incredibly complex political context to a few statistics and inner-circle political intrigue. It could leave you with the belief that 500,000 Ugandans were slaughtered because Africa is just one messed-up place. However, I believe that the writer intended just the opposite. McAvoy does a great job of bringing his character’s inner anguish to the screen, along with the requisite run-as-you-live Hollywood thriller suspense. He plays a believable, well-meaning, gin-sipping, blue-eyed devil. The poolside party scenes are eerily reminiscent of Berlin in the late 1930s. It made me wonder if someday there will be similar films about us. Will movies show New Yorkers drinking $15 martinis as U.S. troops kill Iraqi civilians by the thousands? This film shows the incredible ingenuity humans use to resist them about the part they play in this scary world, especially if they are busy having a good time.

—LEILAH BINDER

THEATRE

Rachel Speaks

MY NAME IS RACHEL CORRIS
MINETTA LANE THEATER
DIRECTED BY AL RICKMAN

M y name is Rachel Corris and I’m back in town after eight months of censorship that kept the story of the Palestinian U.S. activist out of the New York Theatre Workshop. The play is now showing at the Minetta Lane Theater—a tiny production space that might have felt claustrophobic had Rachel’s spirit not looked so large over the sparsely decorated stage. Clemming concrete and a cheerfully disorgan- ized bedroom make up the entire minimalist set as the play follows the flow of Rachel’s thoughts, bouncing from anecdotes about her rebellious ex-boyfriend and “neo-
Tempting Faith is the story of a devout Christian who tried to put his ideals into action in the Bush administration’s Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives. As disillusioned evangelical voters weigh their allegiance to the Republican Party in this year’s mid-term elections, the book also reads as a parable for what happens to decent people when they go to Washington.

David Kuo, the bass-fishing son of a Chinese immigrant, landed his first major political gig at age 24 as an aide for William Bennett. “I was in awe,” he writes. Anyone familiar with Bennett’s gambling addiction or his vindictive leadership of the “War on Drugs” during the Reagan years would be amazed that Kuo was so idealistic about working for him. There are moving moments in Tempting Faith in which Kuo’s commitment to uplifting the poor is painfully clear, painful because he then goes on to outline how his faith and the faith of those around him were used by the Bush administration for political gain. Kuo is a tragic character. We want him to do the right thing, but he keeps falling in with the wrong crowd. In short, he is naive, or has at least acted naively.

It was March 2003 to be deputy director of the Office of Faith-Based Initiatives, he coined the term “Compassion in Action” to describe compassionate conservatism and the thrust of his office. Kuo’s work centered around the Charity Aid, Recovery and Empowerment (CARE) Act, which sought to increase funding for faith-based groups that provide social services. However, as social services are of little interest to Bush’s pious backers, Kuo found only minimal congressional support despite months of push for his legislation.

Kuo writes, “A senior leadership staff member was the cleanest ‘Fore! Forget about the $48 billion CARE Act.”

The concerns to educate small faith-based groups on how to obtain government funding. These conferences had the potential to lure community groups with people-of-color constituencies into the Republican fold and were supported by Karl Rove, Bush’s top political strategist. However, funding for these groups dropped to $30 million per year, down from the $280 million promised. Kuo eventually resigned in December 2003 when it dawned on him that the Bush administration was backing these conferences solely for political advantage. Upon his exit, Kuo expressed his viewpoint in a forceful way for the first time: “I turned in my badge and on my way out did the customary thing by delivering my resignation letter to Andy Card. He accepted it, shook my hand, thanked me for all I’d done, wished me well on my future and health, and asked me if I had any thoughts on how the White House could improve. I had been through too much not to say something. The president had made great promises but they hadn’t been delivered on. Worse than that, the White House hadn’t tried… And finally, sir, this thought. I don’t know if you are aware of this, but your staff frequently refers to faith-based initiative as the ‘$48 billion faith-based initiative.’ That doesn’t help. Nonetheless, Kuo goes on to defend the character of the Machiavellian politicians who bamboozled him. “Did [President Bush] ever care about anyone but himself? Of course not.”

Karl Rove, Kuo says is, “a peerless political operative with a soft heart.”

Despite Kuo’s naivety, Tempting Faith is intriguing because of its discussion of Christianity as a political tool in the Bush administration, and Kuo’s startling conclusion that religious conservatives need to take a two-year hiatus from politics.

—CLARK MERREFIELD

Klezmer Bluegrass

ANY STATMAN

Only Statman says that “On one level, playing music just happens and is something I can’t control. On another, my experience with the music opens up and plays itself.” This isn’t a surprising admission. Statman is a vigorous bluegrass mandolinist, klezmer clarinetist, and much-heralded sensation in both worlds. A stubbornly small audience artist, Statman is as spiritual as the music he plays that “guides everything that happens.” Loose-limbed in motion with a fluid swagger in notes, Statman plays so excitedly that he nearly causes the black-cloth kippah to tip off his head.

Congregation Derek Amman, or the Charles Street Synagogue, in Greenwich Village hosts the Andy Statman Trio twice a week. The band, Statman on clarinet and mandolin, Jim Whitney on bass, Larry Eagle on drums and percussion, makes music that is stacked with down-home goodness, appropriated served with shots of scotch and bourbon on the side. All members carry different channels of charisma. Statman murmurs a low drone over his melody lines, Jim swings and power-kicks sometimes, and Larry rummages in his bag of tricks for unpredictable tools of the trade: chump change, spring drums, bells.

The Andy Statman Trio is not aloof, excessive or crowd-pleasing. What makes them cool is that they play solely for the sake of chasing a journey of music. Spiritually elevating in rapid escalation and strewed velocity, the Andy Statman trio thrills with versatility, virtuosity and sophisticated storytelling. They need only each other’s skills to create moving dreamscapes of macabre and joy. Statman straddles the role of insider as a klezmer musician and role of outsider as a master of another native language with aripe, robust history: Americans bluegrass. His sound is the collision of two music genres linked in a mission to constantly revive and rediscover. A New York native and first-generation American, Statman comes from a long line of cantors and professional musicians. At the same time, Statman grew up absorbed in Earl Scruggs, Lester Flatt, obsessed with West Virginia shortwave radio and as a teenager sweet-talked his way into New Jersey and Pennsylvania bars to hear tunes. Later, Statman earned a brief stint in Nashville and returned in zealous stile. His influences include mandolinist Bill Monroe, fiddler Vasser Clements, Peter Wernick, John Coltaine and Thelonious Monk.

Statman is exasive about his authority as a practically peerless musician. He was pivotal in the progressive bluegrass movement of the 1970’s as founding member of the Newgrass collective “Country Cooking,” and collaborated with greats like Ricky Skaggs, Bela Fleck and David Grisman. He is also a primary luminary of klezmer’s revival, as a pupil-turnt-protégé of Dave Tarras, who bequeathed prized instruments to Statman. Statman’s brain for histrionic led to a collabora- tion with Irzhak Perlman and the Klezmer Quartet.

Statman is as defensive and self- wielding as hometown musicians come. By learning to hide from plain sight of anything commer- cial, Statman has set himself up for what may seem like a grim, obscure career. Instead, Statman has done something intriguingly radical. By sticking to his artistic integrity, he’s made his own sell- out story cease to exist. This is a minor detail that Statman sacri- fices for sheer satisfaction of play- ing music wherever, whenever, and as much as he can. The result is that Statman’s music is gifted, joyous, humble and highly revered. For these reasons alone, the illuminating Statman truly is one of his kind.

—KAREN FU

Photo: Dennis W. Ho

Music

Klezmer

Book

ILLUSIONS OF A BELIEVER

OF POLITICAL SEDUCTION

ON FREE PRESS (OCTOBER 16, 2006)
When an American dies in a conflict, then it’s news: the murder of four American nuns in El Salvador, Benjamin Linder’s killing at the hands of the contras in Nicaragua and Rachel Corrie’s death by an Israeli bulldozer.

I thought about this when I heard that Brad Will had been killed at the hurricanades in Oaxaca. Seeing the first mainstream notice, a Reuters article, I knew the drill. Suddenly the news would take notice of a five-month-old struggle that it had hitherto shrugged off. An American, a journalist, a New Yorker, Brad in death gave the conflict significance where it didn’t need any.

The media are our collective eyes. When and how they cover an event can change history. The Western media love mass uprisings, change history. The Western media love mass uprisings, not just of who Brad was but the stories he witnessed, reported and supported.

Similar mass uprisings in Latin America, full of life, creativity and conflict, offer all the elements of a compelling story but receive minimal attention from the corporate press.

It is into these events that North Americans like Brad intersect themselves, as reporters, witnesses and solidarity activists. They don’t have a billion-dollar corporation behind them, but many stellar reporting. And occasionally, some become the story.

The irony of Brad’s death, like Rachel’s and others, is that the world suddenly notices their reporting and the deaths of those around them that would have passed otherwise as a number: three killed here, 20 killed there, a hundred somewhere else.

I knew Brad only peripherally, but in 24 hours I learned more about his life than in the five years since I met him. There is now a burst of remembrance of Brad from his comrades and colleagues. But I wonder if there will be any attempt to tell the stories of the others who have died in Oaxaca over the last five months.

I would have paid little attention to the deaths of Emilio Alonso Fabian and Esteban Lopez Zurita they had not also been killed by government bulldozers the same day as Brad in Oaxaca. Yet I know almost nothing about them. I read Emilio was a teacher and saw photos of his intensely anguish family as they mourned Collins. But that’s it.

The problem is magnified when there is no personal connection. For too many, myself included, we may oppose empire but those who die by the U.S. government’s actions remain an abstraction.

How can we comprehend the deaths of 650,000 Iraqis? Through story-telling, which allows us to understand the world in a way that no political tract or philosophical tome can. Hearing the mundane and extraordinary details of people’s lives creates connections where there were none.

Yet in many parts of the world we lack access to such memories. Public remembrance is often a privilege. Families in Nepal often don’t have a single photo to remember lost ones. In Afghanistan many must grieve in secret because it’s too dangerous to mourn a relative who died fighting Western forces. In Iraq thousands of families don’t even know if a loved one is dead and may never even find the body.

The power of the media is its ability to create public memory by choosing which stories to tell. It is a political act. Brad was motivated to tell the stories of those who would otherwise be forgotten. In turn, others are now telling stories not just of who Brad was but the struggles he witnessed, reported on and supported.

It’s important that we seek out the stories of others as well, those we don’t know, in order to understand both the individual loss and the collective loss they represent. It is the essence of the solidarity Brad and many others have given their lives for.
underground

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