

SPHERIC

CUNY Community News Service, Vol. X: #3

• Is This the Choice We've Got to Make? Of All the Choices We Make Every Moment of Every Day? • Is This the Choice We've Got to Make? Of All the Choices We Make Every Moment of Every Day? What choice?

• whatever • violate • eat lunch • don't vote • dance • revolt • sing • cry • suicide • heal • be real • smokadaherb • pay bills



• vote for dole • rage • shine on you crazy diamond • run • don't walk • smile • say "i don't know" • drink gingerale • fly • spherize

Election Special
.....
No Choice But to Choose!



SPHERIC



Volume X, Number 3: No Choice But to Choose

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Spheric is all things except square.

Spheric is a globe of students' tongues dribbling exi/essential trip of the brains in a society of trip of the brains falling, landing, sinking to pieces on a well worn knit of rags worn with the tag CUNY on it as a kefiya around the head, ears, mouth shut in silence piercing cries in hope, anger, boredom, desire, pain, joy in lovemaking meaning in a freedom fight fought daily in an intifada where pens become uzis oozing revolution on sheets of paper floating like stardust gathering in collision, companionship union with one another, joined, added up to be a star, a sphere where minds hold hands. Peace. Spheric loves you and yours and love.

No Choice But to Choose

This special edition of Spheric was created for like minds who share the belief that we are not of like minds, though we've kept in mind that someone is minding the store, but we got no money, so...

Election season is upon us like a limp monsoon and for the first time in a century, voter turn-out is expected to drop below 50%. It is by no means certain that this is a bad thing. The election is lurking around the corner like a lazy mugger and our minds are on tokens, food, sleep, the chill in the air and that passing friend's hair. The only thing worse than simply dismissing the paucity of our two-party choice, would be pretending nothing was wrong, or even just a little wrong, or even in any way acceptable.

Spheric has assembled the usual malcontents (and a few of the newly implicated) to trip on the situation in which we find ourselves forced to not be ourselves for one day of the year. That day is swiftly becoming everyday and before long the embodiment of everyone.

Well, the question that stabs us in our hearts, heads, and especially our minds, is what to do? Maybe the next question should be "so, what's the answer?" The honest to Newt truth is we don't have the answer, at least not a single one. The choice we have to make may not even be the choice we've been offered. It may not even exist, yet. So what. It may be that in each single moment of every single day, we live. That living is nothing but a string of choices and we don't even have to sweat it. You can get with this or you can get with that. Or, you can even choose not to choose and your choice will still be chosen for you.

Within these pages we have collected articles from republicans, liberals, communists and the Bewildered. We have some hope and a bit of despair. Hopefully, you'll find some bit you wouldn't wander across on the limited band width of television propaganda. Remember, it's just a newspaper. If you want more - choose it.

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¡ShoutOutsFromTheMouthOfMadness!

To our families (born and chosen) and/or creators, ALL PRAISE to Amu, Abu, Boro/Choto Bhuya's; Lechona Madre de Mosca for your Moment; Juél & Amor for being true cousins; La Sad Girl for the necessary love; Nee for being Nee, Every spirit known who manifests in memory through the verse here unleashed; Peace to Zshaun, Blandon and the Sisters Hammad. Atom for the Fusion; Much love to Rekha and Ra for confusion; Crazy Horse for the badland Moon; Charles Baudelaire for the moment; Hunter SLAM! for the space to grow; that storm for the right timing; Brooklyn for your rooftop limbo; the Chaplain for the promised flow; Word to Intifada, Jihad everywhere; Word to all the gods of the earth, hand, heart and tongue in CUNY which is the best f'ed-up school in the world. Oh yeah... We almost forgot about thanking the BAD GUY aka the Antagonist.

in memoriam



Nelly Pus-Pus Velasco was eaten by a rhinoceros while walking down Fulson Street in her 20th year on this earth. No matter how much joy she brought to the people she met, she never found peace within herself. She was an angel before she died. She is still dancing with all the world.

¿VOTE?

Election '96: The Truth of the Lie

**The Dignity
Of Electoral
Abstinance**

by Jed Brandt
Hunter College

Voting won't change a thing and we know it. Not voting alone won't change a thing and we know it. In this year saturated by a weird duel between the evil of two lessers, something is wronger than Dole's limp campaign and Clinton's sleazy demeanor. Something deeper is burning our collective soul.

What does it mean that the people who have power do not represent the people they have power over? What kind of way is this to live?

I don't know if America was ever what it dreamed, but now it's not even promising. The current electoral campaign has all the mean spiritedness of a court feud between rival brothers aspiring to the throne. Looking at their spat from the outside, from Brooklyn, their battle could only

In the Soviet Union they had May Day parades, here we have the ritual of voting

Some were indeed saddened by what it had once promised, but for all the Soviet Union's talk about workers, fraternity and all that, people lived in a prison painted red.

The language the Soviets spoke on television and in their schools had little to do with the lives ordinary Russians lived. The workers crowded into factories for Communist Party bosses instead of yuppie managers, but in the grade schools children learned that those same workers ran the country. The Soviet Union invaded Afganistan and Prague, supported military regimes in Africa with some sort of Red Man's Burden, but nowhere did the promise of socialism sing.

We celebrated the fall of the Berlin Wall on both sides and there was a real hope the truth would finally breathe. Boris Yeltsin, a former Communist Party apparatchik became a great anti-communist crusader against the very organization through which he had built his career.

All over the Soviet bloc, Communists turned from red to white with the greatest of ease. It was as if they had never been communists at all. It was as if their rhetoric was only a special code in which the real discussion was encrypted. In the Soviet Union they had May Day parades, here we have the ritual of voting.

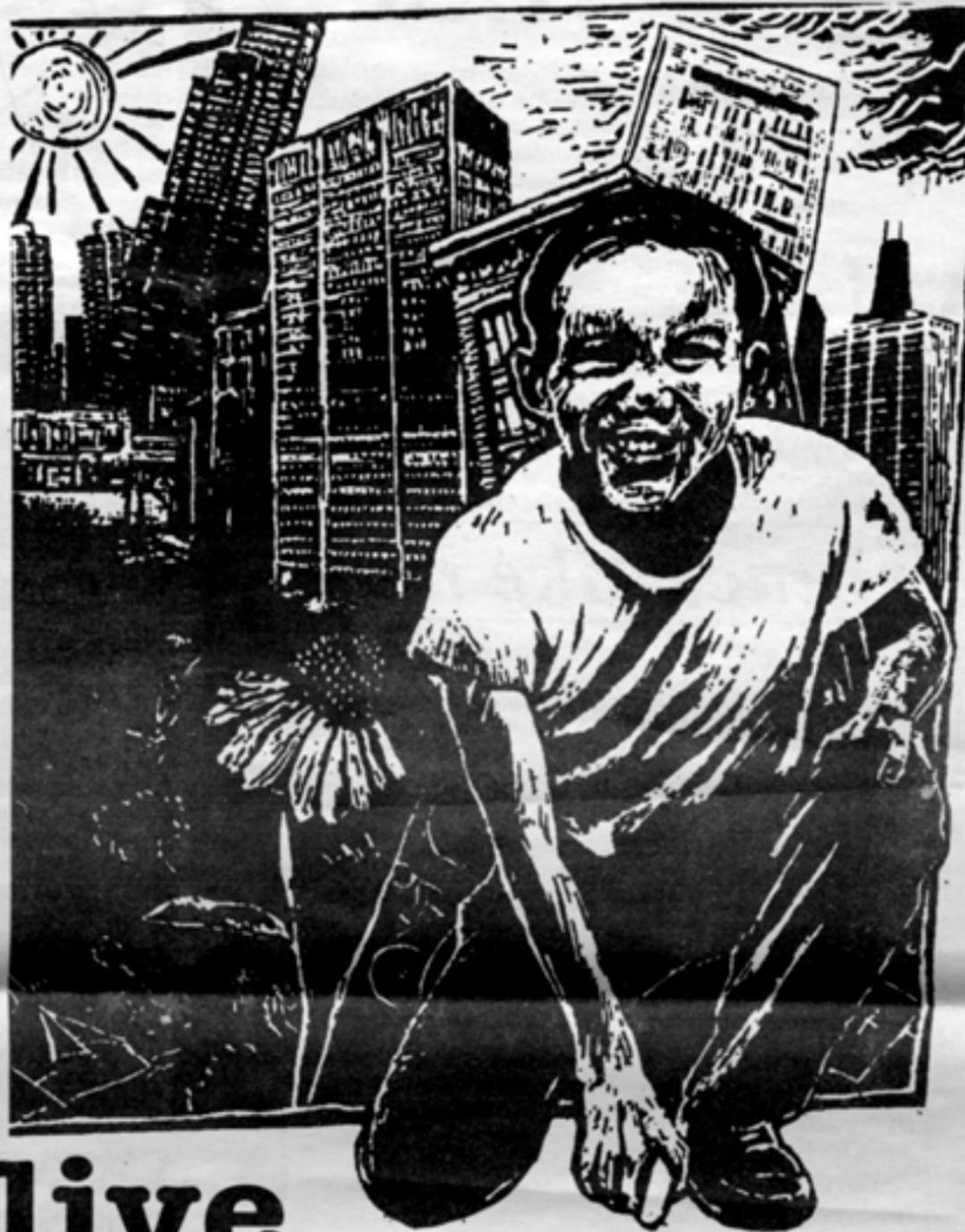
In America, where our Walls have yet to fall, the language of politics has been stolen from the people. For all the discussion of who fought and died for the right to vote, there is no serious talk whatsoever about the profound depravity of the choice we have been offered.

The cities are rotted and the farmers have been dispossessed by agribusiness. Segregation is as bad as Jim Crow days, but we hear more debate from the parties about "reverse discrimination" than the depression-level unemployment among black youth. Heroin is cool again and that means pain is the real epidemic.

Just like in the Soviet Union, the language of the government and media have nothing to do with the desires and hardships of the people.

Here, where the workers are insulted by politicians, instead of patronized, we speak of the middle class and what it supposedly wants. No one ever says who the middle class is, but we're supposed to know.

What is clear is that both parties receive almost equal corporate backing. That neither party is fighting for a world where borders don't scar the earth and prisons don't blight what



**i live
in this city --one day it will be mine**

would otherwise be pastoral countryside. That no media commentators write in their columns this simple truth: America uses democracy the way the Soviets used socialism.

Democracy is supposed to mean a government by "the people." It means the people should have power in choosing others to represent their interests. I have never heard one single politician of any stripe admit the nature of this beast. Some promise social benefits or an end to some particular war, but none offer the right of people to elect their managers at work or demand that companies return all profits to the employees who earned them. Not even close.

Socialism is supposed to mean that the basic people in the society, the workers, run every facet of their lives.

They run their places of work and the schools where children are educated. Socialism is supposed to fight against a government that is even separated from the people. It is supposed to be a world without borders.

The Soviet Communist Party wasn't a workers' party any more than the people here are represented by the American government.

In the structured noise of the media, we are bombarded about the middle class and think we belong because there are no other classes in the media. We hear that America is supposed to be a color blind society, but when the politicians who say that go home, a Guatemalan maid cooks their dinner.

Not necessarily knowing any other way to talk, we pretend it's the truth. We hope that voting matters because somebody tells us it does. We pretend we have a choice, because admitting we don't is painful. It hurts to live without saviors. If one won't descend from the magic of a ballot box or heaven above - then we have to save ourselves.

We need to find a poetry in our hands and loves, our jobs and homes that cannot lie. I hope while we're learning to speak we don't take any lie as somehow closer to true than some other. I hope we have the pride to rise above the insult of these elections. Like I said at the start, not voting alone won't change anything, but at least it has the dignity of honesty.

**never submit to the man
always submit to spheric**

- poems • illustrations • heresy • rants • comics • satire • photography •
- madness • fantasies • explosives • essays • the juice • sedition • journalism •

**We Are Accepting
Submissions For
the Next 2 Issues:**

¿Qué es/tá America?
What does it mean to be american?
What is america? What has it been?
What will it be? What is Americanism?
Are you American? Really? You think so?

The Space Between Wor(L)ds
What is a What is a What is a Word, or
anything you have to say in word about
the word, you know - language games,
mine yours ours theirs.....

VOTING?

Old Yeller Dreams of Days When They Wasn't Just Whistlin' Dixie

**Black
Republicans-
Crazy, Stupid
or Evil?**

By Keith Mitchell

W Hunter College as it just me, or was there something darker at the Republican convention than their plot for world domination? Checking out C-SPAN, I noticed African-Americans taking a prominent role during the big show in San Diego.

From the ubiquitous Colin Powell,

to Oklahoma Congressman J.C. Watts' prime-time speeches, the GOP is making a tremendous bid at wooing the traditionally Democrat voting African-American community into their ranks.

While at one time Black conservatives were considered to be a fringe grouping, their ranks are slowly climbing. Even Jack Kemp was seen eating at Sylvia's restaurant in Harlem selling Dole's program to Black business leaders, and C. Dolores Tucker has gotten mighty cozy with William Bennet over the issue of "gangster rap". With the addition of Black-Rush Limbaugh wannabes like

Armstrong Williams and Ken Hamill, arch-rightwinger Clarence Thomas, and even Phoenix Suns power forward Charles Barkley, many see a strong rightward trend in the Black community that could wreck havoc on Clinton's campaign bid.

Is the right wing getting multi-cultural? Or is this the coming age of the Black middle class? To understand this development, we must look at the historic roots of the relationship between Conservatives and Republicans.

The Myth of Abraham Lincoln and the Republican Party

One of the most overused phrases that was uttered at the Convention is that the GOP is "The party of Abraham Lincoln." Supposedly meant to describe itself as the defender of African-Americans' interest, the concept of Lincoln as savior-of-us-poor-Black-folk is a historical fallacy.

While Lincoln did sign the Emancipation Proclamation, he did so under great pressure from anti-slavery leaders. Also, fearing that Great Britain would officially enter on the side of the South (England depended on the South's cotton plantations, and knew a Confederate victory would impede industrialization in the U.S., thus taking out a possible rival), Lincoln hoped to tap on the energy of Britain's strong Abolitionist movement to divert such a move.

Thus we can see why even the wording of the Proclamation was meaningless. It only freed slaves in states that were in Rebellion against the Union, as if slaves could just get up and leave without serious retribution from their masters. Needless to say, the slave-holding states who fought with the Union didn't recognize the provisions of the Proclamation.

Lincoln also did not envision full equality for African-Americans. In 1858, during a debate with Stephen Douglas, Lincoln remarked "I am not nor ever have been, in favor of bringing about in any way the social and political equality of the white and black races-that I am not, nor ever been, in favor of making voters or jurors of Negroes, nor qualifying them to hold office nor to intimacy with white people... And inasmuch as they cannot so live, while they do remain together there must be a position of the superior and inferior, and I as much as any other man am in favor of having the superior position assigned to the white race." (Complete Works of Abraham Lincoln, vol.IV, pp. 89-90)

During Reconstruction, "Radical Republicans" played a progressive role in establishing rights for Blacks.

The creation of Freedmen Bureaus to aid displaced former slaves, and the 14th amendment which guaranteed basic civil rights to all citizens, allowed some Blacks to gain political power. But these changes were a drop in the bucket as compared to the favors given to the booming Northern capitalists.

While Blacks were denied their "40 acres and a mule," thousands of acres of land were given to railroad tycoons. Without land, many ex-slaves were reduced to the level of sharecroppers. Soon afterwards, Klan

terror infected the South, taking away many of the gains garnered during this period.

The Tradition of Black Conservatives

The Tradition of the Black conservatives can be traced to this period of Southern sharecropping. Southern Black families were forced to live in semi-feudal conditions, while supplying vast amounts of labor power to agricultural giants. Within this

assault against affirmative action, welfare rights, public housing and common decency.

While they scream about independent Black businesses, they wish to accommodate the Black community within the current power structure. Under the disguise of "Empowerment Zones," these conservatives are playing the effective role of neocolonialists for major corporations doing business in the Black community. By prescribing workfare as a cure for

Even Jack Kemp was seen eating at Sylvia's restaurant in Harlem selling Dole's program to Black business leaders, and C. Dolores Tucker has gotten mighty cozy with Bennet over the issue of ganster rap.

context Blacks played a vital role in the rebuilding of the U.S. economy, while being denied their basic human rights.

Instead of fighting for equality, many Black leaders wished to accommodate the Black struggle for liberation to the racist power structure. The most famous of these leaders was Booker T. Washington, who established the Tuskegee Institute. Teaching mostly farming and handicrafts, Washington wasn't interested in developing these skills to break the sharecropping system; rather, he saw it as a way to reinforce the notion of servitude towards white patriarchal power. In his famous speech (dubbed by W.E.B. Dubois as the "Atlanta Compromise") Washington denounced Black freedom fighters like Douglass, saying "The wisest among my race

unemployment and single parent families, cheap labor is provided to work in these establishments. While these zones make a hand full of Black and white businessmen rich, they don't seem to "empower" anyone else.

It would be foolish to say this trend came from nowhere. There's strong concern among brothers and sisters about the decline of the family structure, mass unemployment, rampant drug use, and the degradation of Black women.

The institutions which define our civil society, the schools, the housing, and the police, aren't under our control. The solution can't be found in a system that's the cause of our dilemma in the first place.

What's at stake for the 1996 elections

Beyond the extreme manifestation of Black conservatism seen in Black Republicans, we must understand that the class contradictions within the African-American community manifest across the political spectrum.

For years, Black Democrats have told us to "stay patient," while our communities have been ransacked by drugs, unemployment, lack of adequate health care, and a myriad of other social problems.

With Democrat Carol Mosley-Braun visiting Nigerian dictator Sani Abacha, and the late Ron Brown setting up business deals for U.S. corporations in the Third World, we must recognize that neither political party has our interest at heart.

The bottom line: This election year we shouldn't go meekly into the night placing our hopes on Democrats or Republicans. The only way to achieve social justice is by taking matters in to our own hands. Now is the time to organize a Black communal power structure, that would control the economic and social institutions of our community.

(The headline was stolen from Paul Beatty's poem that appears in *Defense of Mumia*.)

•black like me•

Roger Bonair-Agard

"Dem some butter sneakers kid.
What size are dose?"
No fear in my mind
I reached
Not too far behind
my thoughts.
And came
back with the answer
"9"

"Then they mine"
he said
Accompanied by the bitter, slick sound
of Metal sliding on Metal -
pointed at my head
Banana clip too ready to slip
on any nigger that trip.
I slipped off my shoes
and kicked them over.
"Stay tight, live right" I said
He smacked me with the butt of the gun
In two seconds he was gone
Broke off in a run
as I finished...
"Cause you Black like me."

A white woman called my card last night
"You can't even understand my love,"
she said
And she clung - obeying my every wish -
Trying to make me feel like a king
And not the thing -
she knew I worried about.
And still I could feel only like
Cattle.
Cause...
No matter how DOWN she was
How much she knew
She couldn't make me feel whole
Because the only cry of "Nigger"
she ever heard
was followed by "Lover"
And she could never feel
the wind
Of the last door shut in my face
Or hear
the Hush of the last room
I walked into.
Because Fred Douglas & Malcolm X
& Richard Wright & Martin Luther
could never make her
"Black like Me."

*The only way
to achieve
social justice is
by taking
matters into
our own hands.*

understands that the agitation of questions of social equality is the extremist folly".

Extolled by northern and southern capitalists, Washington was, and remains the symbol of Black conservatism. With his influence reaching all the way to the White House, Washington controlled the purse-strings of many Black institutions. Black colleges didn't serve as centers for liberating, anti-imperialist education, but as bastions of conservative ideology.

Today we still see the shadow of Washington's ideology in Black Republicans. In both speeches, Powell and Watts told of how they "pulled themselves up by their bootstraps," and defied racism.

Not surprisingly, these men have been the puppets of the right wing

EVOTING?

The Mythology of Voting

If They're Not Our Elections We Won't Vote!

by Robert Walker
Revolutionary Worker

For a lot of people, official politics in America looks like a steamroller paving a road to hell — more money for the rich, less for the poor, more censorship and police wiretapping, prisons instead of schools, eliminating checks to poor children to pay military debts and so on. As if last year wasn't extreme enough, the system clearly seems to have its crosshairs set on cutting social security and medicare.

It takes a particularly extreme form of denial these days to see Bill and Hillary Clinton protecting people from the right wing. They are still presenting themselves as moderate, even after signing the abolition of Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC).

Even Clinton himself admitted that some of the provisions of this bill were unjust — like cutting off benefits to legal immigrants and allowing states to cut off food stamps to children. But then his political spin doctors argued that it was necessary to return Democrats to office so they (and not the Republicans) would be the ones monitoring these programs.

The liberal commentator Katha Pollitt wrote in *The Nation* magazine, "now we're supposed to vote for the Democrats so they can undo their own votes!"

Newsflash: No one in high places is suddenly going to call off this war on the people and announce a period of compassion and social justice.

So, how do people turn the tide? How do people defeat a political establishment that seems united on an extreme and cruel course?

The clear and basic need of this moment is a broad, diverse and determined movement of resistance against the vicious policies the ruling class is determined to carry out. Such

a resistance movement is not only necessary — but is possible if we dare to seize the time.

The fact that this fall is the system's official political season represents a challenge and an opening for the voices of real people resisting the cutbacks and clampdowns.

Even as the system urges people to participate, there are millions of people who feel shut out by the official non-choice of Dole vs. Dole Lite. There is a growing sense that relying on political candidates and elections will not bring change.

Katha Pollitt spoke for more than herself when she wrote in *The Nation* about her bitterness at seeing congresspeople she once supported voting for brutal welfare cuts. After the Clinton signature on the welfare bill, she wrote: "Advocacy politics can't turn this around, because advocacy is based on speaking for people, rather than those people acting on their own behalf. Enormous demonstrations around the country, with strikes by S.E.L.U. and A.F.S.C.M.E. [large labor unions], sit-downs in welfare offices and 100,000 homeless people camping out on the capital might have affected the debate. [Liberal children's advocate] Marian Wright Edelman issuing a press release no longer can. Indeed the media didn't even pick up the most

even rupture the smothering blanket of official politics... something that will confront the system with a real October Surprise and light the sky with resistance.

How Things Really Change

In order to build our resistance more powerfully, it is also important to explore some realities about the political process and to deepen our understanding about how things really change.

The official mythology says that elections are how change is made in this country. But the truth is that the important transformations and changes in history, including the history of this country, were never settled through elections.

For example, the United States was filled with conflicts over slavery. But in order to run in national elections, the major political candidates (even Abraham Lincoln) had to swear they wouldn't abolish slavery or radically change society as it was.

The end of slavery took a great struggle of millions of people, including revolts and resistance by the slaves themselves who were not allowed to vote. Ultimately, this struggle developed into a civil war where Northern armies and 200,000 former slaves shattered the armed forces of slavery and overthrew the

SOME PEOPLE



ment that got in the way of U.S. plans. It was hard to portray the U.S. as "the friend of de-colonized Africa" when everyone knew that Black people in Mississippi couldn't hold office or sit on juries — and could be lynched for not stepping off the sidewalk when a white person passed.

Jim Crow was destroyed when, in the '50s and '60s, Black people rose up in revolt — staging sit-ins and boycotts at segregated lunch counters

tion did a section of the system's politicians openly declare their support for this right.

Take a more recent, and less significant change: Bill Clinton defeating George Bush in the 1992 presidential election. Here's the truth: it was the L.A. rebellion of 1992 that put that

SOME PEOPLE ESCAPE



recent one, eloquent as it was."

There are literally millions who feel an urgency to oppose the official policies of the last few years and who want their voices heard. We know that many of these same people will still go ahead and vote, even if more of them are embarrassed to admit it afterwards.

There is a real necessity for all kinds of people to participate together in something real that can actually change the political landscape... something that will challenge and

social system of the Deep South. Voting and elections had little to do with it.

Or take Jim Crow segregation in the South. Before the 1950's, Black people were kept strictly segregated in the Deep South — with separate, grossly inferior schools and separate entrances and bathrooms in official buildings. Blacks and whites were forbidden to date or marry. Black people had to address all white people as "sir" or "Ma'am", while even white children were expected to call adult Black people by their first names.

These hateful inequalities were enforced by the lynchings of the Klan and the legal lynchings of the southern sheriffs.

Jim Crow wasn't abolished at the ballot box. Jim Crow was destroyed because changes in the economy and the world situation weakened this system of oppression and, most importantly, because Black people fought to destroy it!

Southern agriculture mechanized in the '40s and '50s. Millions of Black farm laborers and sharecroppers moved out of the slow, dusty southern farm towns to northern cities.

In those same years, the old European colonial systems were breaking down in Africa. The U.S. imperialists wanted to expand their influence in the new governments coming to power there. Jim Crow became an international embarrass-

and bus stations, demanding an end to special "poll-taxes" and rigged "literacy tests" that denied Black people equal political rights.

Southern jails were filled and major cities started to burn from the rebellions of northern Blacks as the Civil Rights movement segued into the Black Liberation movement.

The U.S. system was forced to grant major concessions by intense popular struggle. And at the time, the system was inclined to grant certain concessions because the old semi-feudal basis for Jim Crow had been fading away in the southern farm areas.

The people wanted liberation and at the same time the oppressors for their own purposes found it necessary to move toward new ways of controlling Black people — new ways that were not so crudely based on Jim Crow segregation's open and legally enforced inequalities.

The change was forced through by struggle, not by voting.

Another example: Women did not win the right to abortion through elections. There was no wave of congressional or presidential candidates who swept into office declaring support for abortion rights.

The legalization of abortion was forced from a reluctant Supreme Court at a time when millions of women were entering the workforce — and rebelling against the system. Only after the system legalized abor-

The official mythology says that elections are how change is made in this country. The truth is that the important changes in the history of this country were never settled through elections.

"hang-dog" look on George Bush, as powerful forces in the U.S. ruling class decided it was definitely time for a change.

Even the system's own change of presidents had more to do with uprising in the streets than it did with any voter registration campaigns.

The reality is that no positive or liberating change ever happened in this social system because of voting or election. How does real change happen?

It comes through struggle: through uniting people from their different points of view — to do what needs to be done for the people... through creative exposures of those who abuse people, through diverse forms of resistance. And at its most thoroughgoing, change comes when the crisis in society becomes so deep and the struggle, organization and consciousness of the people is at the point where a real all-the-way revolution is possible — when power is



SOME PEOPLE FIGHT

PAINTING

A Mí Nunca Me Dió Por la Pintura...

Scary Congressional Art Has No Beauty!

by Jeannine Diego

Have you ever wondered what image people have of you? Everyone has from time to time. If someone were to paint your portrait, for example, what would it look like? What if you were to paint your own portrait? Ah, ya veo. Nunca te dio por la pintura.

Suppose that there exists someone who is, in fact, painting your portrait, yet you know nothing about it. You've heard of the artist, but neither one of you have met.

We'll call him Terretrato. His work is known all over the country, admired by most, criticized by some. This highly skilled and clever artist is rigorously preparing for an upcoming show. He's spent tireless months working on his masterpiece: you. But wait... don't feel flattered just yet. Terretrato's portrait of you is grotesque, distorted. It's entitled "El Enemigo."

Enemy? That's right, and people will believe this image; they trust him. Why shouldn't they? They don't know who you really are. You have no control over it, simply because you don't even know it's happening!

Think I'm kidding? All right, I am. I know you didn't believe it anyway. His name's not really "Terretrato," it's "Congress." Congress, though, is in fact highly skilled and clever, and has been painting this portrait of you, The Immigrant.

"But, I'm not an immigrant," you say? Well, chances are you're lucky enough to be the direct descendent of one who just happened to slip through the crack that Congress is now trying desperately to seal. Your parents' or grandparents' legal status in the US doesn't keep them from forming a part of the "Immigrant Enemy" population of this country.

The "Immigrant Enemy" portrait is one designed to convince the American public that an immigration reform bill is necessary to control and eventually stop the flow of immigrants into the US, while further controlling those already here.

In brief, the bill before Congress (HR -202) would: 1) Provide states with the ability to deny public schooling to the children of illegal parents (Am I the only one gasping for breath here?); 2) It would restrict most medical and social welfare benefits for illegal immigrants, in addition to enforcing some restrictions on legal aliens; 3. It would restrict family reunification visas, as well as sponsorship of legal immigrants, by requiring that a sponsor earn at least twice the poverty rate, while also increasing the term of sponsor responsibility as much as up to ten years; 4) The bill would enforce restrictions which would make it much more difficult to apply for political asylum, for both people abroad and those already in the US; 5) It would make it much harder for the federal government to sue employers believed to use the immigration policy for discriminatory purposes.

If it sounds like this legislation is aimed primarily towards illegal immigration, think again. It was only due to pressure from some Democratic representatives that propositions regarding legal immigrants, originally contained in the bill, were rewritten as separate legislation.

Proponents of the original bill, disturbed and frustrated by these cuts, sustain that even so, the bill is a step in the desired direction of controlling both legal and illegal immigration which, according to Sen. Alan K. Simpson (R-Wyoming), is "straining the fabric of the country." In the words of Lamar Smith (R-Texas), the bill "will encourage legal immigrants to be productive members of our communities and ease the burden on the hardworking taxpayers."

Laden with images of the immigrant involved in a scheme to steal valuable jobs from the unsuspecting American worker and abusing the social welfare system, the arguments for the bill can, at best, be described by a famil-

iar term- "tremendo paquete."

Take the words of Sen. Edward J. Kennedy (D-Massachusetts) "Far too often, American workers are not given first crack at the good jobs going to many foreign workers today." (emphasis added)

I know, I know. We've all seen the American laborers lining up around the block for a crack at the fine job of picking tomatoes out in California, or in a local sweatshop, or a kitchen, or deli, for unheard of wages, unheard of hours, and non-existent benefits.

Even Richard Pombo (California) knows that illegal immigrant

that time they'll be safely tucked away in one of the several hundred prisons which our government is generously pouring so much of our tax dollars into constructing.

You're not convinced, you say. Think I'm being paranoid? Sure I am. Well, just because you're paranoid, it doesn't mean someone is not after you. Earlier this year, around July, you may have heard about a seemingly harmless bill (HR-123, which declares English the official government language of the US. Like most, you were probably surprised to know that English wasn't already the official language.

The "Immigrant Enemy" portrait is one designed to convince the American public that an immigration reform bill is necessary to control and eventually stop the flow of immigrants into the US, while further controlling those already here.

labor is a necessary commodity in this country, "...an insurance policy against unharvested food, closed farms, and higher food costs."

En pocas palabras: it's cheap labor, filling jobs which would otherwise remain unfilled or cause unrest among North American workers.

Surely, at some point, it will dawn on me how all of these measures are supposed to be for our own good, particularly the provision which would deny public schooling to children of illegal immigrants. Does this make sense to anyone?

Perhaps, say, ten years from now, we can ask Mr. Elton Gallegly from California (sponsor of the provision on public schools), why those children did not just vanish into thin air, or why they just vandalized his neighbor's house, or became the heads of various street gangs terrorizing his own well cared for kids?

On the other hand, maybe by

That bill is based on the premise that the immigrant population would learn English more readily and quickly if most government documents, such as bilingual voting ballots were not provided in areas with large concentrations of non-English-speaking voters.

In the ever-modest words of House Speaker Newt Gingrich, the bill takes "a modest step in the right direction of reinforcing and reasserting the greatest civilization ever to provide freedom in the human race."

Randy Cunningham, from California, said that English proficiency would enable workers to "achieve the American Dream." Sounds almost touching, huh? Their dear concern is just disarming, really.

Particularly considering the fact that an amendment, proposed by Rep. Serrano of New York, was rejected on two separate occasions. The amendment would have expanded educational opportunities and information resources, while encouraging all US residents to learn or maintain

skills in a language other than English, in addition to opposing restrictions on languages other than English, and continuing to provide bilingual services.

At least Patrick J. Kennedy (D-Rhode Island) acknowledges that "the bill is playing directly into the politics of fear and prejudice that... Congress is so well known for."

So, there you have it. The "Immigrant Enemy" portrait depicts you as a threat. You're considered a "burden on hard working taxpayers," as "straining the fabric of the country," etc.

If you believe that people know better than to buy this paquete, consider the words of Bob Dole: "When you have one, two, three million people walking across your border every year, breaking your laws, you have an invasion."

The ignorance escalates to new levels in the words of Ruth Coffey, the jefe of an organization called Stop Immigration Now: "I have no intention of being the object of conquest, peaceful or otherwise, by Latino, Asians, Blacks, Arabs, or any other group who has claimed my country."

It's no secret that this is an election year, which means that it would be unwise for either party to run on this issue. The clever artisans of Congress know how and when to unveil controversial masterpieces such as these bills. This buys us some much needed and valuable time.

Understandably, you may feel slight discomfort at being labeled the "Immigrant Enemy". You're probably even a bit skeptical. I've yet to meet someone in New York (myself included) that takes someone's opinion just because it's given.

Well, that's not necessarily a bad thing, so I encourage you to research the facts on your own. Find out whether Congress's fear of you overtaking the country is justified. The National Immigration Forum and The Cato Institute (800-767-1241) can provide you with demographic and economic facts, suited to their prejudices of course.

Hey, you never know a lo mejor le da por la pintura.



FROM THE RIGHT

Let's Put the Work In Workfare



**No More
Free Rides
For the Lazy!**

Ny the Self Made Man now that we all agree Welfare is past its prime, we need to seriously address a replacement. For too long food stamps-on-demand was the rule of the land.

Decades went by when millions chose not to work because a welfare check only took a walk to the mailbox. Women of loose morals fornicated solely to get more of our tax money with which to support their decadent lifestyles. Is that what made this country great? I don't think so.

When those first brave pilgrims journeyed to the land that would become America, they crafted the unappreciated wilderness with hard uncomplaining work. They built a nation and their sweat paved the path to our prosperity. It was only in the 1930's when, in a time of struggle, unscrupulous and covert communist agitators fooled the people into thinking that government giveaways were some birthright.

The New Deal was nothing more than a way for the unsuccessful to steal the blood, sweat and tears of the men who made America. Great men like J.P. Morgan and Andrew Carnegie had their fortunes widdled away so that half-men who didn't work could spend their afternoons drinking gin and complaining about what they didn't get for doing nothing.

Luckily, nowhere in the constitution does it state they have the right to be lazy. Under the courageous, common sense leadership of President Clinton, we have finally begun to undo the folly of senseless government waste.

But remember, no matter how tempting it is, we can't let our hearts harden to harsh realities of contemporary America.

What with millions of Mexicans streaming across the border, how can our inner-city welfare mothers learn to compete? Just throwing them into the workforce when they do not know how to work is plain un-Christian. We need a middle ground on which we all can agree.

This is where the "Middle Ground Workfare Program" comes into action. The long learned habits of the Culture of Poverty are hard to break. We need to give a hand-up instead of the ridiculous hand-out.

In the Reagan era, grant-based education funding was transformed into the Guaranteed Student Loan system. This move saved our colleges from the blatant abuses of the 1960's, when pot-smoking terrorists used government-provided college money to promote sedition and promiscuity.

Instead of some intellectual hoodlum getting a "tuition" handout, he and his kind were forced to undertake substantial personal loans. This ensured that the skills we gave them at the University would have to be used for cash earning work and not Beatnik poetry love-ins. Today, due to

**Pot-smoking
terrorists used
government-
provided
college money
to promote
sedition and
promiscuity.**

the efficiency of this system, college students are no longer Beatniks.

However, this successful program merely moved delinquency out of the dorms and into the projects. We should seize this opportunity to expand the privatization of aid and encourage Citibank and Chase to issue personal loans for those who need some money to get by.

Of course you want to know how the destitute will repay these loans. Massive initial capital can be raised, but default could be disas-

trous. That is where the Workfare program comes in.

Upon receiving the loan, applicants will be given a generous one-month grace period in which to repay their debt to society. If they choose to neglect their responsibilities, work will be provided.

Workfare Houses will be established all across America and Puerto Rico. Each Workfare house will be directly owned by the bank which originally issued the loan. The bank, holding the debt of its defaulters, will contract their labor out to independent companies short of hands.

Since all of their wages will go to repaying the defaulter's loan, the bank may have to issue further one-month advances to be repaid by the next months work. Some may complain that they could not leave the situation, but their problem will be of their own making. The bank should not be made to lose money intended to help a person who obviously doesn't take the personal responsibility of repaying debts seriously.

I expect the banks may be hesitant to embark on such an ambitious course of action, but the incentive is great. This is not an era of big government regulation. Once a bank holds the Workfare loan debt, they should be free to do with it what they please. I suggest setting up a market for trading in debt obligations.

Rather than renting debt workers from the bank on a temporary basis, companies could buy the loan debt outright. They would then hold the right to the debtor's labor. Now, the debtor is a productive member of society instead of milking from the public tit. Workfare provides jobs and makes business happy. That, my friends, is the American Way.

Unfortunately, the problem runs deeper still. The moral degeneracy produced by the welfare state has not merely undermined the economic fabric of this country, but still threatens to cripple America's cultural supremacy.

In states such as West Virginia, where food stamps constitute the de facto local currency, the faces of George Washington, Abraham Lincoln and Alexander Hamilton go virtually unrecognized.

Instead the only President they

seem to revere is F.D.R., patron saint of the lazy and undeserving, whose likeness graces their food stamp ticket to sumptuous, riotous living off of our tax dollars.

To this I say "no more free rides in America!" Hopefully, when my plan is adopted and people realize

To replace this antiquated and somewhat arbitrary system, we should have Annual Citizenship Assessments (with staff provided by Citibank) where each man must provide proof of employment and each woman must bring in a new American baby.

Decades went by when millions chose not to work because a welfare check only took a walk to the mailbox. Women of loose morals fornicated solely to get more of our tax money with which to support their decadent lifestyles. Is that what made this country great? I don't think so.

they are living on credit, they will be less likely to spend their money on foreign, imported caviar. As it stands, you can't even find good old American made caviar on our supermarket shelves. The spendthrift waste of welfare recipients, promoted by liberal elitists, has almost destroyed our native Sturgeon egg harvesting industry. And that's not the worst of it.

Mother Russia might just rise again, resurrected by our misguided foreign aid and their craven caviar-fueled economy. Well I don't want some Ivan coming in to spoon feed me their caviar and crappy steel. She's not my Mother, Russia. If some yak butter eating Mongol like Ghengis Khan can run roughshod over their boundless steppes, who needs them.

Their ilk deserve nothing from us until they can prove themselves worthy as citizens of America. This Workfare program is not merely fiscally responsible, but will serve as the opening volley in a cultural war to retake the soul of America.

Speaking of the soul of America, isn't it high time we asked why any old person fortuitous enough to be born on our shores is automatically, with no background check, granted citizenship? It's like being guaranteed to win the lottery.

Men who do not work will be deprived of their undeserved citizenship and deported to some appropriate country, such as Ireland. Women who forget their duty and appear without requisite offspring, will be sterilized for more suitable work in our pleasure industry.

I have no doubt that somewhere some panty-waist will be running around and hollering about alleged human rights violations. But really, let's be up front for a minute about the people who conjured up the bizarre notion that people possessed special privileges, which they call "rights," guaranteed by big government.

Who are they? The French sissies with all their absinthe swilling, goatie sporting eggheads. The Germans in their beer halls, wolfing down sausages in mustard and Critiquing Pure Reason or Judgment or whatever is those Huns rant about in their dialectical stupor. Hell, Karl Marx himself was a German, and a Jew to boot. All of them, ranting about "the Enlightenment this, the Enlightenment that." They practically went communist.

Well, we're Americans and we're already enlightened, thank you very much. In America we believe nothing should be guaranteed by the government unless somebody owns it and that includes you. God Bless You All, Each And Every Earned American.

BOOK REVIEW

Public Schools Must Die!

**Does your school suck?
It's no accident!**

In order to know what we want and how to get it, we need to know what is and how and why it came to be. As student organizers and activists dedicated to transforming education and the world, we need to know exactly how schools are constructed to diffuse our power.

In *The Night Is Dark and I Am Far From Home*, Jonathan Kozol offers an analysis of the purpose of public education in the United States and the processes by which it functions.

"The problem is not that public schools do not work well, but that they do." With this sentence, Kozol begins an analysis of public education that runs counter to much of today's progressive school reform talk.

Much of the discussion around the failure of public schools focuses on flawed teaching methodologies and/or incompetent or ill-intentioned bureaucracies. Very rarely does anyone address the possibility that what many of us see as the problems with public schooling are not mistakes, accidents or failings, but in fact, are the intentions of the powers that be.

Kozol argues that the first and primary function of United States public school is to create good citizens who believe that they are caring and compassionate (and very well may be), but also believe in their impotence to take any action or make any mark upon the world.

Kozol first addresses the straight up lies told in classrooms across the country. He states that many textbooks claim that "we go to foreign nations, every time, to bring 'new methods,' 'modern technology,' or financial aid. Nobody tells the children, in plain fact that we are there to (1) to make money, (2) to operate a missile base, (3) to put down a social revolution."

This kind of lie is not unexpected or mindless. According to Kozol, these lies are part of a conscious effort to wrap American minds in what he calls a "shell... that protects us from acute perceptions of those things we understand, or visible action on those evils we perceive."

Even among so-called progressive educators, the perceived necessity of these lies (either explicit or by omission) remains. As a student teacher in a "progressive" teacher education program, I read an example of a supposedly "radical" new way of teaching elementary school students about Thanksgiving in which students were engaged and active; knowledge was created by them rather than transmitted to them, and yet, the teacher still managed to avoid any mention of the genocide of native people as a result of the European

invasion.

When I brought this up to my professor, she balked and asked if I really thought it was appropriate to bring up such "scary" issues with young students.

School Is Not Real

Kozol explains how the content taught in schools is completely divorced from any sense of realism. By dividing up time and areas of study into periods, grades, sections, units, assignments etc., schools enforce a kind of mental disconnection. Schools are structured so that nothing makes sense in the context of

The Night Is Dark and I Am Far From Home

by Jonathan Kozol • 269 p. • New York: Simon & Schuster • \$10 • 1990 (with critical annotations)

human transformation that they had in mind were relegated, from the first, to film or chronicle, past ages, distant possibilities or alien suppositions.

"There is the sense that serious matters take place, by inherent choice, either in other lands or else in former centuries: *never where we may be and while we live.*"

To ensure that **NOTHING REAL EVER HAPPENS IN SCHOOL**, schools have created mechanisms to diffuse and/or reroute any dissent on

schools is the infamous "Letter of the Earnest Citizen." Kozol describes how as an organized lesson, children write letters to their congresspersons about an "important issue" that they have researched in their Social Studies class. They mail the letters. A little while later, they receive a response stating that their representative is most concerned about this issue, that recommendations to subcommittees are in the works, that research is underway, and thanks them for their

caused the dissent in the first place.

The collegiate version of the "Letter of the Earnest Citizen" rears its head: the school-wide discussion.

When Dean Jack Kruskopf of the Graduate School of Urban Policy at the New School met with students who were outraged that their school was honoring Mayor Giuliani with an award for public service, he refused to rescind the award and offered to arrange a series of "discussions" about public service as an alternative

a message to the planners



from a panel of experts

anything else.

We study math, then history, then literature and no one bothers to explain how these human endeavours might be related. More importantly, very little, if any, effort is made to connect what students learn in school to their own lives.

In school, we might study the

part of students. Kozol refers to the many times students are told not to criticize anything unless they can offer a superior alternative.

How many times have we been told by a teacher that "It is very easy to criticize without offering something better"? Kozol responds that it is not easy at all to criticize a ritual of

concern and dedication to civic duty.

Meanwhile, the "important issue" remains: the river is still being polluted, stores still discriminate against black people, their school still does not have enough books. Nothing has changed. What is more, there was never any expectation of change. Kozol writes, "It is not the effort I condemn, not the wistful try and not the good idealism I condemn. It is the will to lead ourselves to think we are 'doing something' if we are not doing anything at all except carry out a ritual of effort-and-denial... This is, by now, a bedrock item in the course of classroom preparation: Ask, try, fail and be refused. Speculate somewhat (write a little essay) on the reasons for that failure. Now go on to a new subject."

Stopping dissent in its tracks or routing it into a pre-programmed act of futility is not to be found simply in the elementary and high schools.

College is Bigger and Better

At the college level this diffusion of dissent comes in different forms. Often times, students become rerouted by an examination of themselves. The examination of the dissent itself substitutes for action on the thing that

to protest.

This is yet another example of how schools teach that truth is something that is said, not done. The student who writes an eloquent essay about the evils of pollution will be rewarded. The student who puts his or her body on the line to stop toxins from being dumped in the river will be expelled.

Kozol writes "Truth is something which occurs when actions take place, not when phrases are contrived. Truth is not a word which represents the correct response to an examination, nor a well-written piece of prose. Truth is not a 'right word' which can be printed. It is (it is only) a 'right deed' which can be done."

Educating the Master Class and Us

Much of Kozol's book deals with how children of the ruling classes are desensitized in school to the suffering inflicted on others for the purposes of their own comparative comfort.

However, much of his book can be applied to the public schools that "serve" the oppressed. The same processes that numb the children of

The problems with public schooling are not mistakes, accidents or failings, but in fact, are the intentions of the powers that be.

Civil Rights movement, but there is a calculated effort to cut that study off from where we are now.

Teaching students to take the "I" out of papers is also a part of this mental disconnection. Kozol argues that this staple of the educational process fosters a feeling of impotence in students, the sense that great things will be done by someone else, not by them. Kozol writes, "I hear kids speaking often of the most important processes of human struggle and of social change as if the passages of

schooling or what is said in school textbooks in the face of teachers, administrators, and an entire institution.

Furthermore, realizing that something terribly wrong is happening is the first step in creating change. This tactic is a very common one that stops student dissent before it has time to develop and grow.

Teaching Lessons in Futility

Yet another tactic on the part of

go to next page

from last page

the rich to the brutal contradictions that favor them, teach the children of the poor futility and patience.

"Few of us ever learn to live at peace with our own conscience," writes Kozol. For him the only way to "live at peace with our own conscience" is to act on our beliefs. "IF YOU BELIEVE NOTHING, SAY SO. IF YOU BELIEVE SOMETHING, TURN BELIEF INTO A CONCRETE DEED."

Kozol Chumps Out

Kozol wrote *The Night Is Dark and I Am Far From Home* in 1975. The book was republished in 1990 with annotations that serve to soften or renege on some of the strongest and most forceful points in the book.

In 1975 Kozol writes, "The school that flies the flag and conscientiously serves the interests of that flag cannot serve those of justice."

His 1990 critical annotations add that such a statement "can be supported only by the most demeaning vision of the meaning of that flag." Kozol seems to have forgotten the demeaning things done to people around the world in the name of the United States flag.

Despite this capitulation to the prevailing reluctance in the present-day to put out any social or political critique that is passionate and steadfast, the power of his last words remain:

If and when, a teacher does take action, and at length should be expelled from public school [Kozol was fired from the Boston Public Schools in 1964 when he brought a Langston Hughes poem, "The Ballad of the Landlord", into his fourth grade classroom], it is important that he[or she] understand that this is not unless he or she wishes the last chapter of his or her work and struggle in the lives of children. Children learn a great deal more, in my belief, out of the recognition of the price that must be paid by those whom public schools cannot contain, or do not dare to keep, than from ten thousand lessons on Thoreau and Malcolm X. . . Power knows where its own interest lies; so too do those machineries that serve and strengthen power. School indoctrination is the keystone of a mighty archway in this land. It will not be removed without grave consequences for the structure it supports. Nor will it be taken out without the kind of struggle and the kind of sacrifice that great events and serious human transformations always call for.



If You Do Not VOTE- This Is What You Could DO!

Love the earth and sun and the animals, despise riches, give alms to every one that asks, stand up for the stupid and crazy, devote your income and labor to others, hate tyrants, argue not concerning God, have patience and indulgence toward the people, take off your hat to nothing known or unknown or to any man or number of men, go freely with powerful uneducated persons and with the young and with the mothers of families, read *Spheric* in the open air every season of every year of your life, re-examine all you have been told at school or church or in any book, dismiss whatever insults your own soul, and your very flesh shall be a great poem and have the richest fluency not only in its works but in the silent lines of its lips and face and between the lashes of your eyes and in every motion and joint of your body....

poem by Walt Whitman
poll advice by Spheric

nother man dead

suheir hammad

where the words
to disguise what
i see make
visions palatable color
there words with
a palette more lady
like less blood

in language not mine
that houses no beauty
no comfort for
nature for me
words horrific and terrible

what this shine eye
girl sees through
bars and barbed wire
prisons prime
real estate 25 years
later no escape

2 years before me
attica was auchwitz is algeria

ripped naked and stripped
humanity forced to
crawl mudlike
and 25 years later
war criminals still celebrated
babies consecrated animals

no words there
are no words to
sugar this up
genocide passes as
eye candy for
media hungry for cash
and like cash people are
passed from hand to dirty
hand open palms
passing sand through
time not mine living
on borrowed clocks
tupac is dead and attica
forgotten

in language ugly and time
up where is there space
for flowers

in hearts jailed there are
no morning glories to bid
god a good day
kids lick flames of
hot ice screams
rain stark

where the rainbow arch
to wash eyes
clean of rawanda bosnia
and iraq again
fill mouths with angels'
breath to make forget

memory absorbs like soil
there are no words
and not one word
erases my earth

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Inmates who seized Attica in 1971

Tupac Shakur R.I.P

Liberation & Atonement

It Takes a Nation of Millions...

by Blandon Hunter College

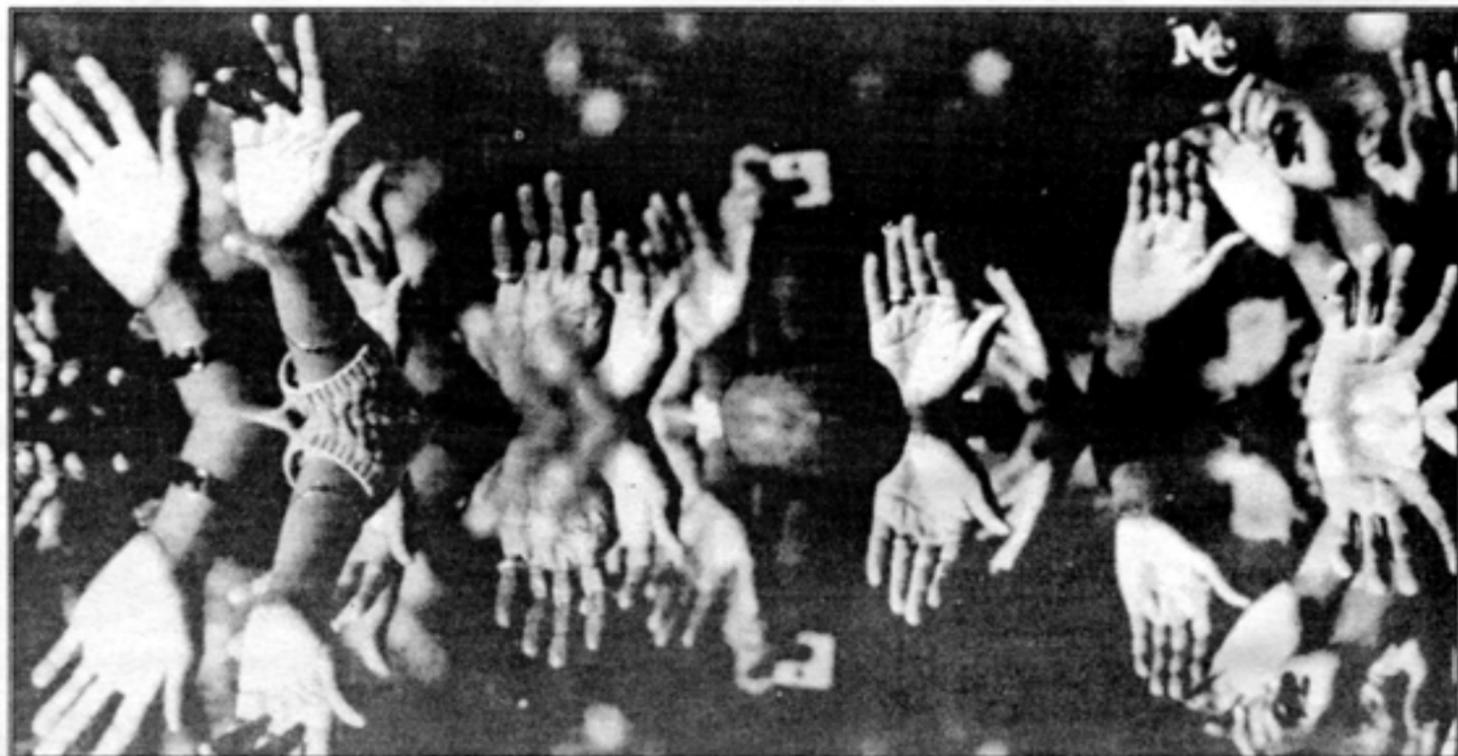
The Day of Atonement was established for Black people on October 16, 1995 as our annual Holy day. This observance sprouted in the advent of the Million Man March.

Contrary to some assertions, the Million Man March was not a call for Black men to atone as an apologetic gesture to America for their "degeneracy." Rather, we fully understand the desperation and decay in the Black community to be the result of the racial domination and class structure of the society in which we live.

The Honorable Minister Louis Farrakhan called one million Black men to Washington D.C. for an Atonement to God and to each other.

We have been unjust to ourselves as a people because we have internalized the warped thinking of white supremacy. Without a love of self, we have preyed on one another, as planned by the enemy.

The slave master, the colonialist, the neo-colonialist, the CEO, and all of them from the President on down depend on the self-sustaining apparatus of Black inferiority within our community to deliver the devastating blows of murder, disunity and strife. They rule without having to pull the



trigger themselves; they just blame it on "those crazy niggers."

Atonement brings unity, the lack of which is a major impediment to our rise as a people. The process of Atonement allows us to regroup and unite as a people, as any army under siege must do in order to launch a successful counter attack.

The mere presence of over a million Black men, standing in front of the Lincoln memorial and facing the capitol building sent shock waves throughout America and the world.

This shock was especially felt by those in positions of leadership who thought they controlled the people. The official Black leadership was shocked when the masses responded favorably to Minister Louis Farrakhan and other black activists whom the political propaganda machines in this nation have worked feverishly against.

One million Black men stood as brothers on the capitol mall that day and declared that the 13th, 14th and 15th amendments to the Constitution, the legacy of Lincoln and the rest of American democracy to be a hoax.

onymous with apology and that therefore we have no need of it.

Atonement is a process by which progressive steps are made toward right relations in our personal lives, our homes, our communities, our nation and yes — the

Atonement amongst a family, tribe, village or nation disarms imperialists and slave masters from effectively using their tactics of divide and conquer.

The ultimate aim of Atonement is Liberation. This process allows the participant to attain true freedom. The freedom I speak of is not the ordinary kind that is maintained by political sovereignty alone.

True freedom allows people to create the means for their physical sustenance. So they should never be beggars at the foot of other nations. However, if there is not an adequate trading of resources amongst themselves, such self-sufficiency will never be attained. Only when Black folk stop seeing the white man's ice as colder than our own will we adopt the principle of Do For Self.

Atonement allows us to see one another as human, worthy of each others love, respect and yes, each other's money. Atonement causes brothers to be brotherly and sisters to be sisterly to each other. Who would oppose such a process unless they are against the rise of Black people?

To free ourselves from white supremacy, we must go past just seeking political rights that we are, even now, unwilling to leverage in our favor for fear of offending the "good whites."

Atonement and unity must undergird all endeavors that are undertaken for the good of our people, lest we remain tied to our former slave masters via self-hatred and strife.

Atonement is a necessary and powerful, and if we ignore it we will be ill-equipped for the battle of truth that will ultimately determine if we go free or remain in bondage.

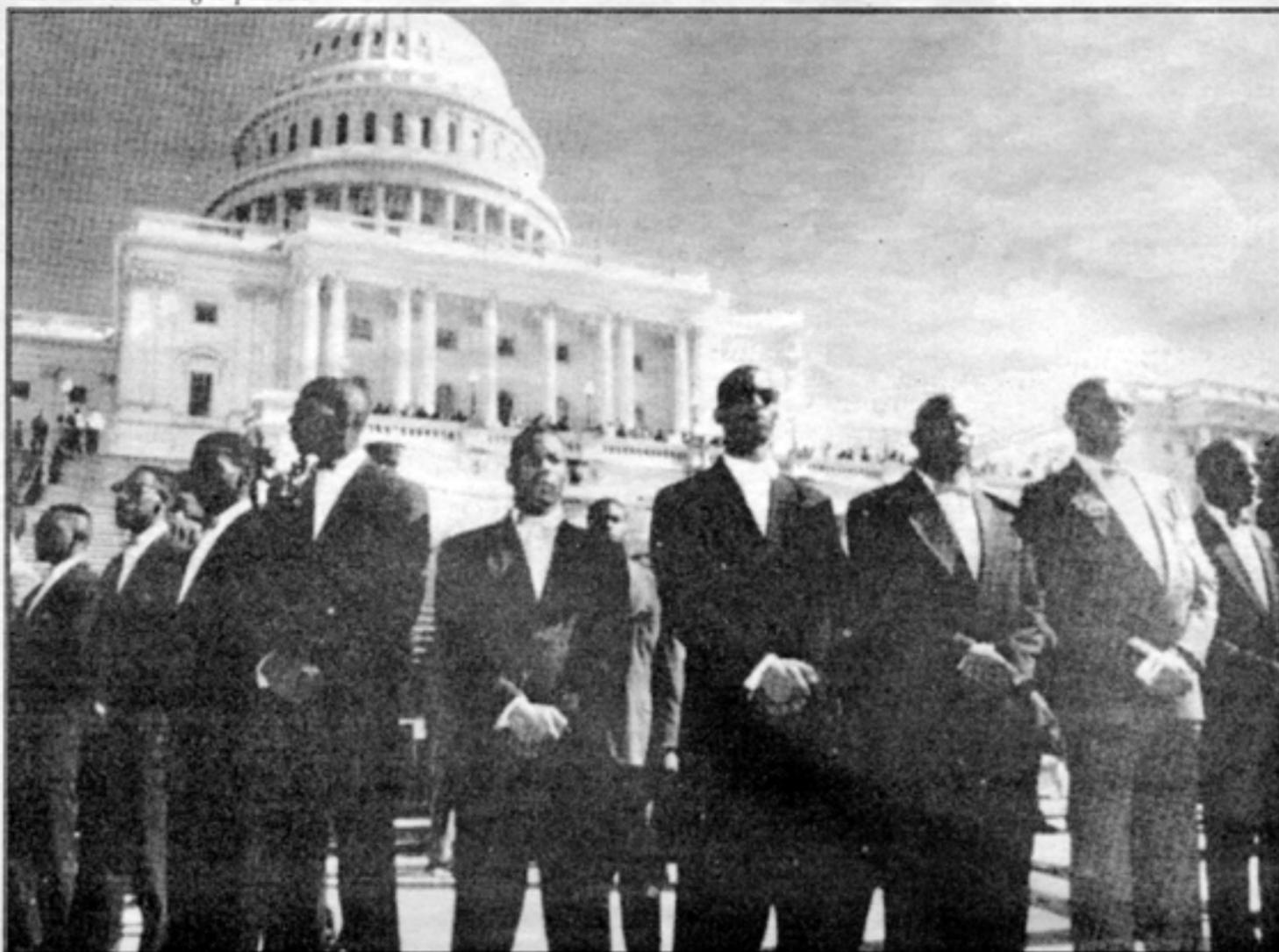
Only when Black folk stop seeing the white man's ice as being colder, will we adopt the principle of "Do For Self."

Black men authoritatively declared to America that she must make recompense to her ex-slaves and to the poor and disenfranchised of this nation.

It would be criminal for anyone to try and convince Black people that Atonement is not for us, that somehow Atonement is syn-

One God.

When an individual has truly right relations with God you can't deceive him with false theology. A true man of God can never be a slave. It is precisely for this reason that the white man didn't introduce atonement to slaves and the indigenous peoples of conquered lands.



Left: The Fruit of Islam strike a pose beside the capitol at the Million Man March

Above - Hands raised at the MMM in sign of atonement

VOTING?

Students Invited to Two Parties

**Politicians
Don't Care-
But You Darn
Well Should!**

M By Alicia Siebenaler
Young Republican
any people think
that the choice is
between the lesser
of two evils, that the
options are not very palatable, or
indeed they are so bad that there is no
point in voting at all. These I put in to
the *disillusioned* camp. However, first I
would like to deal with the *my-one-
vote-doesn't-count-anyway* camp.

Those who do not think their
vote really counts are only partly cor-
rect: It is true that, given the electoral
college, a difference of one popular
vote either way will not change the
outcome of the election.

However, for every one of you
out there, who subscribe to this
belief, there are at least a thousand
more like you: One of you plus a
thousand more equals one thousand
and one. Now that is a number that
can effect change!

As for the *disillusioned* camp,
there are those who advocate staying
home on election day as a means of
protest, of showing that the choices
are so bad that they will not choose
either one. This kind of protest is use-
less because in the end nothing
changes. A politician does not care
how many people turn out to cast
their ballot on election day. There
will always be a win-
ner as the outcome is
not contingent upon
majority turnout.

Many people are dis-
illusioned about the candi-
dates running for office. To be
sure, there is probably not
much we, as individuals,
can do to change this, but
we certainly can change
the focus of the debate.

We can tell the

candidates what they should be
emphasizing. Witness the grassroots
campaign that got Ross Perot on
every ballot in the country for the '92
election. While it is true that Perot
has a vast sum of money, not all of
the people who pounded the pave-
ment seeking signatures were paid.

However, the Perot party's issue
concerning the national debt and
deficit greatly influenced what the
two main candidates discussed: Bush
and Clinton were forced to address
this in 1992 because of the *People for
Ross Perot*. We the people have the
power to determine the key issues of
an election. We need only exercise it.

Whoever feels disenfranchised
must get involved with the party sys-
tem. It need not be either of the two
parties, but because the others are not
mainstream, the Democratic and
Republican parties offer the best
opportunity in which one can realize
their vision.

For better or for worse, looking
at the history of the party system, one
can see the evolution of ideas and
issues. The Republican Party of today
is not filled with abolitionist fire-
brands; and Dixiecrats have been flee-
ing the Democratic fold for decades.

The Republican Party was the
first to endorse the Equal Rights
Amendment and the northern Demo-
cratic Party sought to address the
social and economic inequalities
many Americans lived with through
the Great Society and War on Poverty
programs.

The Republican
Party was not
always con-
trolled
by a

minority faction of religious funda-
mentalists, nor has the Democratic
Party always advocated sweeping
welfare downsizing.

These changes, for better or
worse, were effected by individual
people who were willing to sacrifice
time and energy in order to fight for
what they believed was right.

I know there are cynics out there
who believe that the only people with
any power are those with money.
While it is true that politicians receive
great amounts of special interest mon-
ey, the non-profit interest groups get
their money in little \$3 and \$5 contri-
butions from grandma and grandpa
(AARP), or you and me (NYPIRG).
You have the power to change the sit-
uation if you do not like it, but are
you willing?

There are two assumptions a
politician can make in light of recent
low voter turnout: 1) The voters like
what we're talking about and do not
care who wins, or 2) They do not vote
because they cannot bear to choose
either evil. Guess to which one they
subscribe?

Voting on Tuesday, November
5th is neither
the beginning
nor the end of
the process of
effecting change, but
it can be the begin-
ning of your full
participation in the
process. Remem-
ber, you have only
yourself to blame
if you do not
participate.

**You Have
the Power-
Even If You
Don't Know It!**

by Vincent V. Louis
Hunter NYPIRG

The right to vote is the core
symbol of democratic
political systems," one
writer wrote. When a
large number of people in a democ-
racy deliberately decide not to vote
in elections, the democratic political
system breaks down and it is the
young and less well off that suffer
the most as a result. The alternative
to voting is not voting; certainly,
everyone has the right not to vote.

However, more than 60% of
Americans have decided that voting
for political representatives of their
choice is more preferable to not vot-
ing at all.

But, there is a long way to
go in convincing the
entire eligible voting
population in the
United States to
vote. The highest
percentage of the
non-voters are
young people
between the ages
of 18 and 20
years.

According to the
Census Bureau, 20% of
this age group voted in
gubernatorial elections
in 1994. The typical
question they ask is:
Why should I vote?
And they reason thus: "I
have very little influence
as a CUNY student, politi-
cians won't listen to me."

On the other hand, almost triple
the number of voters 45 years and
older voted in these same elections.
You can safely conclude that Gov-
ernor George Pataki's policies will
cater to the interests of that large bloc
of voters in the older generation. I
am not interested in encouraging a
generational feud here, but simply
pointing out why young people, and
students in particular, should vote.

Since his election in 1994, Gov-
ernor George Pataki has shown that
he is not particularly friendly to col-
lege students. Hunter College stu-
dents (and indeed other students in
the CUNY and SUNY systems) have
felt the wrath of Governor George
Pataki. One of the Governor's first
acts when he took over office in 1994
was to propose cuts to the budgets of
the City University of New York
(CUNY) and to the State University
of New York (SUNY).

The reduction in state support
for higher education led to decisions
to raise tuition by \$750.00, and to
eliminate some college programs, in
some cases eliminating entire depart-

ments.

After tuition increase and elimi-
nation of programs in the CUNY and
SUNY systems, many students could
not afford to return to college. Addi-
tionally, many students had to take
on full time employment and go to
school part time, adding years to
their graduation time.

If students had voted at an 80%
level, would George Pataki have pur-
sued the same policies? The governor
also had a willing accomplice: New
York City's Mayor, Rudolph Giuliani
who won his election by 2% in 1993.

There are other issues of impor-
tance to young people that politi-
cians decide. In 1995, both Governor
Pataki and Mayor Giuliani agreed to
cut the Metropolitan Transit
Authority's (MTA) budget by \$86 mil-
lion. How did the governor and the
city propose to pay for the obvious
shortfall that would result? (You
know the answer to this already.)
Because most politicians are interest-
ed in being re-elected again and
again, they are too willing to follow
the instructions of party bosses or
campaign contributors.

For the most part young people,
students and non-voters are left
without recourse during budget
time. At the same time multinational
corporations push through incinerator
contracts over recycling, and the
transit fare keeps going up while the
public waits on the platform for
decent service.

Whatever issue you choose —
financial aid and tuition, the environ-
ment, mass transit, education reform,
crime, or health insurance reform —
we're only going to get as good a sys-
tem as politicians are willing to give
us during their term as elected offi-
cials. Our job as voters is to remind
them that they are servants of the peo-
ple. They are there to do our bidding.

By voting, we force politicians to
take notice of young people and stu-
dents in particular. As a result, it will
not be the same 20% to 30% of their
district electing them. Elected officials
will know that if they raise tuition
there are thousands of students
ready to vote them out of office.

When students decide to exer-
cise their strength during election
time, the results make politicians
cringe.

This year's elections are of
tremendous importance. Every sin-
gle state senator and state assembly
member's seat is up for election.

Should we give up on the politi-
cal system that we now have by
relinquishing our right to vote?

No, absolutely not!

By not voting young people will
continue to be disenfranchised.
Someone else's electoral choice will
then make decisions that affect the
lives of young people.

Participatory democracy means
that every person eligible to take part
in it should participate. The result
can only be a stronger society where
every member is sufficiently
involved and taken care of.



Fetishes of Commodity, Breast & Text

Books That Aren't Books—Ass That's Not Ass!

by epiphany praxis
does not exist

1 **Practical Epiphany**
Not so long ago, I had worked stacking books at the Strand on Broadway. Side by side lay sports books, philosophy, fat novels and pulp editions of statistics and strange sexual anecdotes especially designed for reading on the toilet.

Particles of dust shed from the volumes clogged the air of the basement where I worked. A basement, filled with well educated minimum-wage workers who meandered around intent to stay in random motion while accomplishing great amounts of nothing.

Foremen with strangely serious faces wandered around through the aisles occasionally asking just what it was we were doing. We were high and bored. We found different answers, though the truth never changed. The majority of the staff smoked marijuana daily.

I do not believe I ever saw any paid worker on the floor do anything.

On day, after a slim lunch-time joint, I walked back in the front door. When confronted with the imposing row upon row and stack upon stack, I realized the entire Strand possessed

They have made the productions of their own minds: their love, hope, union, law, genesis and reason - in short their own pieces of divinity, take the form of an apocalyptic Jew murdered 20 centuries ago.

not one book. There were nowhere there any books at all. Not one.

It was, in fact, a plantation and I picked cotton under the florescent sun. There were no books, only something besides the books.

Fred Bass, the owner of the Strand, could just have easily been selling opium or laxatives or steel or Nikes. I arranged units. Each unit had a value and that value was what Fred knew how to read.

Fred is, to this day, a very wealthy man. I made \$4.25 an hour.

Deciding to investigate this qua-

si-epiphany, I went to one of the books which glowed from the back of the store. All the books which were not books were glowing just a little, but this one was calling out to me. (They are, after all, still books no matter their unnatural illumination or what I thought about it.)

A wrinkled, yet gleaming print of Capital looked more inviting than when it had simply seemed one of the great books men had fought and died for.

Now it appeared to have some use beyond its "great book"-ness. I reached down to the ankle shelf and opened randomly to the 4th section of the first part and saw a little essay entitled "The Fetishism of Commodities and the Secret Thereof." *The Secret Thereof?*, I thought, *most peculiar*. I decided to steal a little Capital of my own.

Enslaved to Fearsome Dreams

2 Overcome with a strange terror, I ran from work in the middle of the next week never to return. Running south down Broadway, I dodged taxis and beautiful women until, without a thought, I found myself at the entrance of a Christian temple, standing just before the shimmering vats of holy water.

Over the altar loomed a life-sized Christ with thick iron nails jutting from his bleeding wrists. A few women sat in his shadow muttering to themselves very quickly and quietly. I went in, sat down and began to think as a curious mist enveloped the room. This is what I painted in my mind.

Who are the women talking to? Themselves, of course. What are they asking? That is not the important question. They are asking something of their world, themselves, their husbands, their future. Does god exist? Yes, a most beautiful creature radiates in these gentle women's minds. They have made the productions of their own minds: their love, hope, union, law, genesis and reason, in short their own pieces of divinity, take the form of an apocalyptic Jew murdered twenty centuries ago. Artisans in a small Italian city-state carved out a likeness for him four centuries ago, which hangs above these women's heads. For these radiant women, their divinity is not theirs, but is in form and content, his. He is Jesus, their Lord and Savior. He intercedes on their behalf with God who is not theirs, either. They are his, no matter that he is theirs. He is no savior, save their making of him. This spiritual creature who they have crafted is an object outside of them and over them, not of them, yet determining them. This Christ, this fetish of love.

Overcome with a fearsome thirst, I stopped by the shimmering vats on my way out for a drink. I dipped my cupped hands into the elegant pool which caught the golden light of the votives and I drank great gulps.

"In the name of God!" said a newly arrived priest.

"I'll be with you in a moment," I replied. "I'm thirsty and this water is so cool and delicious."

"This water is sacred, my son."
"This water tastes damn good and if you're my father, you've got a lot of explaining to do."

"Do you mean to blaspheme in the house of God?"

"Priest, I don't believe I can," and with this I departed, never to return again.

3 **Some Idols Do Not Wish To Be Carved**
Running down Broadway as evening ran into the city, I broke my neck scoping a young honey in an appropriately tight skirt. The curve of her back into the full of her backside just about caused me pain. The streets were filled with people going from some place to some other place, but in the instant my eyes put their eyes on their prize, wasn't nothing going nowhere.

I stood still as she kept walking, but my discretion must have slipped as she turned back round and walked up to me. Her eyes had fire and her full lips looked like they were fixing to say exactly what I wanted to hear. They didn't.

"I am a total stranger to you. You know nothing about me and I have no time to teach you. Remember that next time, Ponyboy." And with that she was off, never to return again.

I did not know her name, dreams or temperament.

4 **Learning Hieroglyphics**
Running wild into Washington Square, I was only stopped by the rounded brute belly of a fig bearded gentleman who held a promise in one hand, a joke in the other.

Yes, it was fate for the gentleman produced a sealed carafe of sweet tea from a secreted pocket in his flowing dress and pointed to a nearby bench. Without words we walked over and began to drink.

"Damn good tea," I said.
"Tis not tea, save in the drinking," said he. "But drinking is not that which you wish to discuss my sweaty brother. No drinking is not the word today, not tea, not work nor the secret trick of fraternity. Though fraternity is the answer of the riddle with which we fiddle."

"But the tea is very good."
"Thank you very much," he said. "Now really young man, why have you bumped me from the path I wandered?"

"I wish to know the secret of

these strange teas which are not teas and books which are not books and really, underneath it all, men who are not men."

"And women perhaps most of all," he added to my confusion.

The fat gentleman with the promise and the joke decided, I must assume, to offer me neither. Something rather different came from his maw as he looked across the park.

Her eyes had fire and her full lips looked like they were fixing to say exactly what I wanted to hear. They didn't.

scratched his scruffy chin and met my eyes.

"It is clear as noonday, that man, by his industry, changes the forms of the materials furnished by nature, in such a way as to make them useful to him. The form of wood, for instance is altered, by making a table out of it. Yet, for all that, the table continues to be that common, everyday thing, wood. You see?"

"Illuminate, old man."
"Illuminate I shall. As soon as our fashioned wood steps forth as a commodity, it is changed into something transcendent. It not only stands with its feet on the ground, but, in relation to all other commodities, it stands on its head, and evolves out of its wooden brain grotesque ideas, far more wonderful than table-turning ever was," he said.

"Forgive me, where does this, dare I call it mystical quality spring from? Is it a table or isn't it? Why does it cease being just a table?" I inquired.

"Clearly, from the form of the commodity itself. For as it is produced as a commodity for exchange with other commodities, it is not really produced to be filled with food and wine and wild talk. Nay, it contains a value which is determined by its socially necessary labor. It is created by people for sale. Any commodity is like a pitcher that holds the very act of liquid creation, that labor contained within it. The larger the filled pitcher, the more other pitchers it can be traded for. The pitcher will never quench your thirst. In fact, you will dehydrate the more water you pour into it. It is most definitely a mysterious thing, this commodity."

"Quite a mouthful! Thank you, thank you," I offered.

"Pipe down, I'm just getting warmed up. For the social character of men's labor appears to them as an objective character stamped upon the product of that labor; because the relation of the producers to the sum total of their own labor is presented to them as a social relation, existing not between themselves, but between the products of their labor. That is the



ANECDOTE

Friday Night's Not Always Alright

**Pigs, Thugs and Trains-
On the Night
of the Debate**

by Rekhwon M. Joseph

Ten and a half million more jobs. 100 thousand more police on the streets. 50 thousand felons denied handguns..." The statistics swirled around me, around my livingroom, crowded by family and I-know-you-are-but-what-am-I mud-slinging politics of Clinton/Dole-presidential debates.

"100 thousand more police... Felons...handguns..." The words

"Police" and "Felons" merged, kneaded a nice bullet and triggered into a recent unomitable past. The past was last Friday night...

Around 3:00a.m.

After a continual succession of rejections from every club in a twenty block radius (ranging from Vertigo to Palladium to the Bank), my friends Andre, Riff and I had finally decided to surrender ourselves as clubless refugees and call it a night.

As we emerged from the steps of a pool hall on 8th street, which had a 25 and older policy, our last attempt for the night, we found ourselves languishing behind a squadron of shaved headed, army-apparelled 19-year olds.

The group, being keen to club-reject astrology, noted our dejective karma and decided to uplift our spirits. "Didn't get in?" the brawny, really heavyweight, Fat-Joe-ish lieutenant of

the crew asked us. "Nah," I answered nonchalantly as a collective voice, looking ahead.

Riff and Andre must not have appreciated my vocal monopoly, as they found this an opportunity to hold a communion, confessing the betrayals of the night. As we roved the West Village streets, each one of us paired with two of them, I walked at an unequal speed, seconds behind them, weary about making friends with street rambos at three o'clock in the morning.

Before long my suspicions unfolded. As always the pint sized, Napoleon-complexed member of the group set things off. "Get the loot, get the loot," he chanted. I felt like sitting him down and explaining to him why it would be a great waste of his/their time and efforts in attempting such a thing, since robbing me would be no different than stealing GAP bags stuffed with lint.

But like the animated *Decepticons*, they transformed into one big Voltron-ish ruffian, exhausting their uniform energies on Riff, whose commune was reluctantly terminated.

Andre, a giant amongst us all, stood frozen, agape and unable to even shake. I, being wise to the game, walked with the harsh winds of the night, knowing I had to do something. So I did what I never thought I would do.

I found myself by a payphone punching in the taboo three digits.

"Hello."
"Ah, hi." I gasped. "Ah, I'm at ah..." I gave him directions and a quick caption of the scenario.

"How many of them are there," he asked.

"Ah, alot," I said stupefied by his question. Then he continued: "Are they big or small? Black or white? Indian or Arab? Hoodlum or bum?" to which he later amended the latter

as meaning the same thing.

"Please," I cut him off. "Just get here."

By this time Andre and Riff zoomed past me sirening "help" helplessly. Napoleon, waving a .22, wasn't far behind with his army trailing. I realigned with my festered friends who shouted insults at no one in particular and the world at large, while unyieldly liquefying ghastly streets.

We must've resembled a faction of the Fat Albert gang, the ones who attempted to dethrone the great jabba Albert himself. I, being Rudy, flung I-told-you-so's at them. By a minutes end we were at the N/R station, which became our homes for the next hour.

I was fined \$65 for hopping the train by a plain clothes cop I took to be just another thug. "But..." and I

like the animated *Decepticons*, they transformed into one big Voltron-ish ruffian.

blurted away the latest events of the night. "That's not my problem" he said. His words rung in my ear with the *get the loot* phrase in some queer but real harmony.

At 4:30 the faint light of the train in the tunnel could be seen; so could police sirens be heard. I wondered if it was the one I called for an hour ago. I hoped not.

I walked blue into the train, Andre, swearing, Riff looking like Rocky after a fight voiced the fear we all felt on the back of our heads: "He could've shot me."

This Is Amerika

"I'm for opportunity, responsibility and community..." It was Clinton's turn to jab. Opportunity and Community for who? I wondered. Probably not for the community of thugs, I swore revenge on. Still, I couldn't help but wonder whether these felons had jobs, whether they'd attempt to rob us if they did.

"First let me tell you what we have done..." the President continued. If he and his squadron had deployed 100 thousand more cops, where were they that night?

It's true there were a lot more cops on campuses and it was true that this in turn generated a record economy for makers of deoderant yet I couldn't understand what kind of community this could possibly have fostered.

If handguns were being denied where were these kids getting their .22's? Wait a minute, I thought, maybe these kids were much wiser than my dreams of revenge allowed. Should we all give up arms in complete trust to the blue race who answered only to the pink race in a white house?

Images from Anthony Baez to all the billy clubs I've seen drummed on project skin flashed before me, before I received the answer: "This is the USA," Dole said. "You are not going to go without food, you are not going to go without...This is America."



Fetish

from page 13

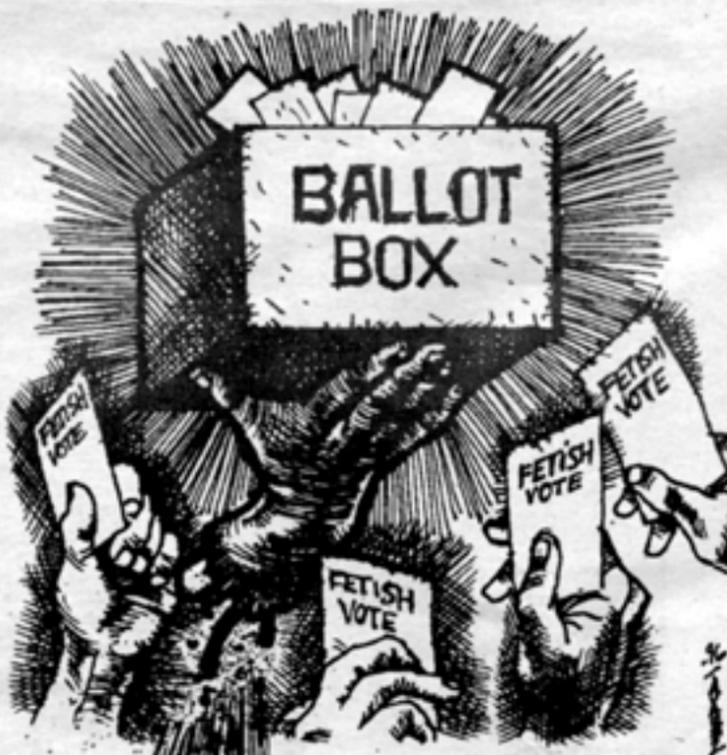
secret we all know," he whispered the last bit and sipped some tea.

"This is weird. No, don't protest, it really. Isn't it tea because we drink it?" I queried.

"Whose talking about drinking tea? The existence of the things as commodities, and the value relation between the products of labor which stamps them as commodities, have absolutely no connection with their physical properties and with the material relations arising therefrom. There it is a definite social relation between men, that assumes, in their eyes, the fantastic form of a relation between things."

I thought of Fred Bass, my old overseer at the Strand and saw for the first time the hieroglyphics he deciphered. *Truly a sick kind of wisdom that knows the truth of lies.* But, the fat man continued.

"These commodities, which are now most all we see, are really just relations between us which appear to us creators as things which have value only in relation to each other. Where it is only by being exchanged that the things we have created acquire, as values, one uniform social status, totally different from how we actually use them. Until, like magic, we no longer make anything to be used. Selling everywhere and everything, nothing is what it is but is something still," he gasped, throwing up his hands.



"A fetish?" I offered.

"Of course, that which we've made which is not ours. Our own child, our conquering and foreign ruler; a tyrant who knows no mercy or care. Yeah, in our wisdom, we've created a mute stupidity which drowns all music in noise. But this stupidity is only the shroud of our society and in lifting the shroud we find the secret of who we are."

"We are what we are not and are not who we are?" I asked.

"Something like that, but what do I know? Not much, I tell you, but more than those of simple science who see our desires as simple and granted and the flow of money as natural as rivers. Yeah, behind the shroud..." he was growing distracted until he so

completely lost his train of thought that this fatman product of my mind forgot himself to be and collapsed into my next thought, which was...

I am thirsty for this text is merely text, a creation of the thousands who grow the food that feeds the printer of this page, that our grammars are merely a commodity of mind which I may construct and fetishize and deconstruct as if it were its own. That I may play with specters of mind and word seeking within the thoughts themselves the keys to doors found only in hand. That fetishes of commodity and text and breast are not so dissimilar and prevent the making of love which is mine and hers and yours and ours. That we are the love we make which is us, but for now is not.

Long live the revolution.

Mythology of Voting

from page 5

seized and old structures are torn down and uprooted. Then something new and truly liberating can be born. There is a lot of history and understanding behind our viewpoint that: "Elections are the wrong arena. It's going to come down to revolutionary war."

Voting Is Not a Powersource

Another look at history: Jesse Jackson got millions of votes, and registered millions of new voters when he ran for president in the 1980s—and as a reward, he was rudely dismissed by both Dukakis and Clinton. Unions and Black Democrats have run decades of voter registration campaigns—and the interests of oppressed people are more crudely ignored than at any time in the last 60 years of U.S. politics.

The system and its political leaders are not fundamentally controlled or even particularly influenced by the desires of voters. It is the other way around: the election season is the time when the broad population is trained to accept and support those, policies that the ruling class intends to carry out. For example, after the 1992 race, the public was suddenly supposed to support massive cuts in social services so the budget deficit could be reduced.

In 1992, the ruling class installed Clinton, the candidate of "CHANGE," as their next president. Many people voted thinking that Clinton would bring "changes," and would create "space" for progressive ideas and movements. It's worth summing up: did those votes for Clinton bring any positive changes? Don't

more homeless face a home-less winter? Haven't more working people been laid off, and more office workers been "downsized"? Don't police patrol and kill on ghetto streets like an occupying army? Haven't the border forces grown even more and intensified their persecution of immigrant proletarians? Has there been any easing of the male supremacist ways this society keeps women down? Doesn't fabulous wealth created by people living in intense poverty around the world still flow disproportionately to the United States? And hasn't that domination been intensified by Clinton's support for the NAFTA and GATT treaties?

Both parties insist "this is the era of lean and mean" and that "big government is dead." By this they mean that the system no longer guarantees the "social contracts" made with various sections of the population—stable union jobs, living wages, benefits, or even basic safety nets like welfare, medicaid, social security, and food stamps. Instead, the only guarantee offered these days is more prison cells for people who step out of line. They demand that the people give up their hopes and expectations, they demand that people live with fear and insecurity.

The reason the major candidates seem dead-set on launching these attacks is not because there is some huge groundswell of meanness among the voters. It's the other way around—because the system has decided to launch such cutbacks, they have mobilized, financed and unleashed forces through a combination of lies and appealing to prejudices—in order to create political sup-

port for these policies.

This war on the people emerged because it reflects and serves the current needs of the monopoly capitalist class who control this system. All kinds of changes including the collapse of the Soviet Union, restructuring in the world economy, the increase of U.S. government debt—is leading the power structure to insist on a wholesale downsizing.

Some voter registration organizers insist: "The fact that they ignore us just shows we need to get even more actively involved in the election process at the local level." But this approach completely falls for the official myth that voters have any real power in this society. And therefore, the story goes, if you have voters for your cause, you will have power.

Over the last two centuries, the people who run this country murdered millions of Indians, enslaved millions of Africans, sent armies of cops and soldiers against rebelling workers, crushed thousand of small farmers, and drove millions of people out of business. They invade foreign countries almost yearly. They use their power structure to control, brutalize and kill people every single day of the year. They do all this to preserve their power and wealth. So isn't it strange to think that these same bloody rulers would suddenly turn around and hand over power to people every November?

Climbing into a voting booth doesn't make you powerful—any more than climbing into the back of a squad car makes you a cop. If voting gave people real power, the system would make it illegal.

and if you mourn
election season
here is what
You May Do...

Always be drunk. That's it! The great imperative!

In order not to feel Time's horrid weight bruise your shoulders, sinking you into the earth, get drunk and stay that way.

On what? Wine, poetry, virtue, whatever.

But get drunk.

And if you sometimes happen to wake up on the porches of a pittance, in the green grass of a ditch, in the dismal loneliness of you own room, your drunkenness gone or disappearing, ask the wind, the wave, the star, the bird, the clock, ask everything that groans or rolls or sings, everything that speaks, ask what time it is; and the wind the wave, the star, the bird, the clock will answer you: "Time to get drunk! Don't be martyred slaves of Time, get drunk forever!

Get drunk! Stay drunk! On wine, poetry, virtue, Spheric, whatever."

Poem by Charles Baudelaire
Poll Advice by SPHERIC

LASTWORDS

The Choice is Yours!

**The End of
Dyspeptic
Tyranny!**

by Asif Ullah
Hunter College

Election year has always been a confusing time for me. Questions of who should be president translate to a utilitarian calculation of which candidate smiled more, or how often they showed up on MTV or just how many non-whites they kept in their company (even if they were only there as bullet proof glass). These observations of niceties usually leave me in a dangling booby trap quandary, where my head pendulums in a way reminiscent of Gilligan: ankle hung on a tree, swinging from a blurred pageantry of the Professor to Thirston Howell the Third.

I'm not sure I want a sexually repressed professor who can't even figure out how to get out of an island or a slave-days-nostalgic millionaire who lashes his worthless millions like

a whip, to be my President. Then again I'm not sure what or who I want. Or at least I wasn't sure until the other day, when channel blading, I caught an old Coke ad of making the right decision.

The decision was choosing the right brand of cola and the choice was of course between the incumbent Coke versus the ever expanding Pepsi. Although the commercial couldn't have lasted anymore than 30 seconds it left me struck as if by the hammer of the great hub-a-bub-a Viking Thor himself repeatedly nailing me into a Marvel Comic, or maybe it was more akin to what the hammering of billy-clubs must've done to Rodney King.

Whatever the case, the revelation I received was profoundly stirring, shattering years of election ceilings piled one on top of the other like a building tripped by the foot of a bulldozer, tumbling down, falling to pieces.

I think I was falling to pieces as I stood by, configuring the exegesis revealed in the fire of my nineteen inch Zenith, seemingly burning like a bush. Well, the revelation was this: I hate Coke. I hate Pepsi. In fact I hate and always hated all forms of Cola. And like a weighty grievous black gray cloud I let loose, storming with thoughts potentially communist, so I swiftly closed the windows in fear

that my thoughts may drift out and into the ears of blue men.

Why should I be forced to drink coke when it makes me nauseous, and Pepsi when it makes me puke? I don't even like other brands of cola like squeaky-Texan- Dr. Pepper's, who in their non-Coke/Pepsi affiliation propose to resolve peoples taste

*Observations
of niceties
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quandary.*

buds by offering something "different." It's still Cola!

Cola was, to me, a great big soft drink bully, oppressing all other forms of beverages. Yet, it was cola, I realized, that had taken over the mainstream tongues of our country.

We were all buying it, I thought as I remembered the two liter generic cola in the fridge. It was as common to households across the country, and rapidly across the globe, as was the American dream; people bought and drank it confidently, wholeheartedly, and notably, fashionably, thinking they too now belonged. Strangely enough their dreams of belonging were and are factually met — in the pockets of Coke, Pepsi, and the reign of cola.

In the flood of enlightenment I paced my tongue left-right-left, in clock motion, craving for some good ole' gingerale (not something you see on TV everyday), the eupeptic, queasy-stomach-friendly soft drink that leaves you feeling good and stable all at once. Even if you don't like gingerale it works for the common good of your stomach. Notwithstanding, it occurred to me how gingerale could conceivably be considered a radical soft drink. Imagine: What would it be like if everyone's stomach was steadfast, settled in a eupeptic ecstasy?

It may mean an end to hellish train rides where your only wish, if it were the last one ever, would be to flash to the next stop, which of course would be the awkwardly bowl-shaped fixture of MacDonald's.

It may mean an end to being warped in such constipated self-counseling meditation in the unmoving train while the guy next to you grins profusely knowing how much you have to go and he doesn't and just to



let you know he knows he whips out a brochure of *Bath and Body* turned to the toilet section. It may mean the end of a lot and the beginning of many bigger and better things.

That's when my own silent cogitate constipation ended. My thoughts needed air, release. "That's it!" I hollered, my tonsils ringing ten feet above my head. "I don't want a Coke, Pepsi, a professor, a millionaire, or even a Bill or Bob."

"I want a Gingerale!" Or at least some form of governmental gingerale that would somehow digest all societal ills, not just particular points of interest to pink men in blue suits. A government that would address the needs of my taste buds, why they sometimes go a whole day without tasting anything.

The Professor, Coke, Bill or whatever you want to call him has done little less than nothing to address my tongue and deafening

stomach. Thirston, Pepsi, or just plain Bob plans to legitimize, legalize, and set in stone, *Thou shall not eat*, as a commandment to tens of other commandments already inscribed on the walls of the White (Man's) House, designed to keep slaves, slaves.

I think this election year I finally

*I think this
election year I
finally
understand.*

understand. With this kind of choice, this November 5th, I'll just stay home and pop a gingerale.

illustrations courtesy of Miguel Tatuarez



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