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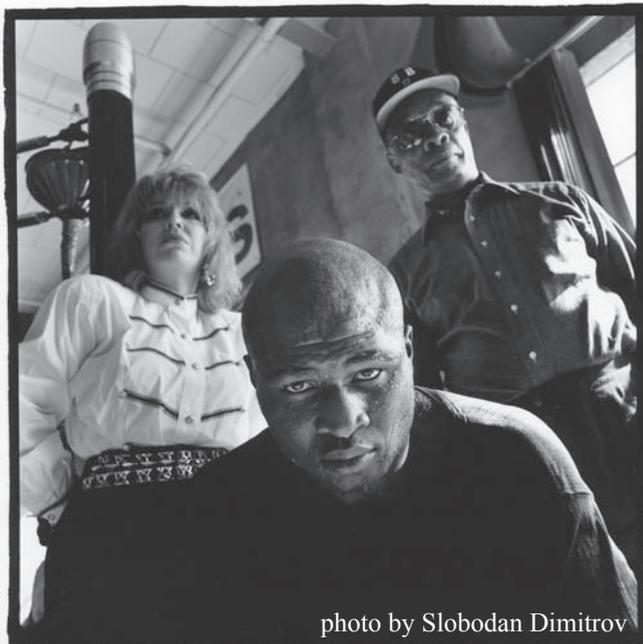


photo by Slobodan Dimitrov

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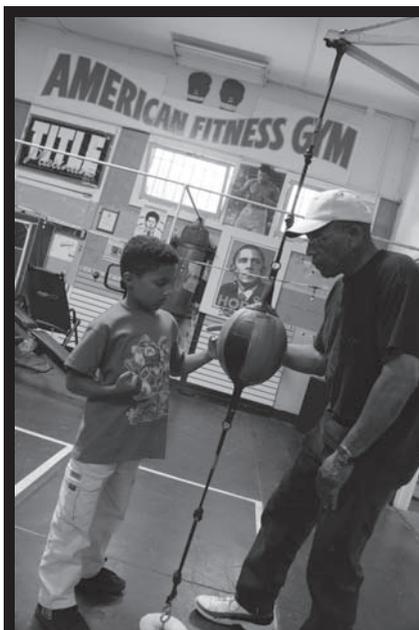
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COVER:

“WILLIAMS BOXING FITNESS GYM”

SLOBODAN DIMITROV



“Williams Boxing Fitness Gym”

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by Slobodan Dimitrov

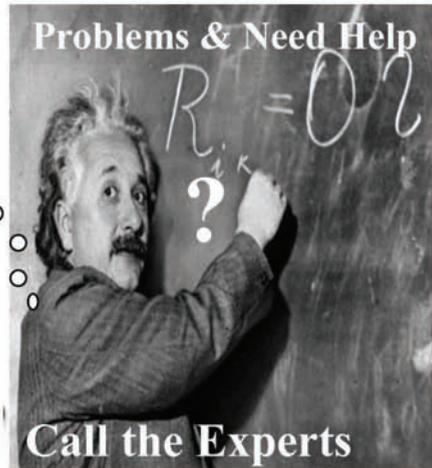
Slobodan Dimitrov is a photographer based in the Long Beach/Los Angeles Harbors. His 20 year long project on the Piledrivers can currently be seen in the lobby of Local 2375, Wilmington CA. He was selected for the Los Angeles Public Library Neighborhood Project to document the community of San Pedro for the public archives in 2000. The San Pedro photographic documentary exhibited at the Central Library in October 2001. In 2008 he received another commission from the Los Angeles Public Library to document industrial Los Angeles in the Port of LA. In July 2010, the Artist Portrait series was exhibited at Angels Gate Cultural Center. To date he has had over 130 exhibits, nationally and internationally.

He has been a contributing photographer for *The Dispatcher*, *LA Weekly*, *The Building Trades News*, *Random Lengths*. His work has appeared in *The Nation*, *Carpenter*, *Solidarity*, *SEIU*, *UNITE*, *Machinists Int.*, *America at Work*, *The Progressive*, *Los Angeles Magazine*, and *The Economist*, among many labor publications and newspapers. sdimetrovphoto.com

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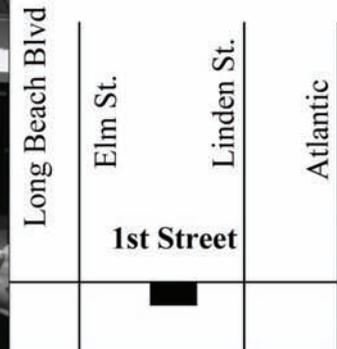
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NUCLEAR IMPLOSION

HARVEY WASSERMAN

Humankind is now threatened by the simultaneous implosion, explosion, incineration, courtroom contempt and drowning of its most lethal industry. We know only two things for certain: worse is yet to come, and those in charge are lying about it--at least to the extent of what they actually know, which is nowhere near enough.

Indeed, the assurances from the nuke power industry continue to flow like the floodwaters now swamping the Missouri Valley heartland.

But major breakthroughs have come from a Pennsylvania Senator and New York's Governor on issues of evacuation and shut-down. And a public campaign for an end to loan guarantees could put an end to the US industry once and for all.

Fukushima: The bad news continues to bleed from Japan with no end in sight. The "light at the end of the tunnel" is an out-of-control radioactive freight train headed to the core of an endangered planet. Widespread internal radioactive contamination among Japanese citizens around Fukushima has now been confirmed. Two whales caught some 650 kilometers from the melting reactors have shown intense radiation. Plutonium, the deadliest substance known to our species, has been found dangerously far from the site.

Tokyo Electric and the Japanese government have admitted to three 100% meltdowns but can't confirm with any reliability the current state of those cores. There's reason to believe one or more have progressed to "melt-throughs" in which they burn through the thick stainless steel pressure vessel and onto the containment floor. The molten cores may be covered with water. But whether they can melt further through the containments and into the ground remains unclear.

Possibilities may include a "China Syndrome" scenario in which one or more still-molten cores melt through the containment and hit ground water. That could lead to a steam explosion and blow still larger clouds of radioactive steam, water and debris into the atmosphere

and ocean. At least three explosions have occurred, one of which may have involved criticality.

There is no doubt at least two containments were breached very early in the disaster. Unit Four is cracked and sinking. The status of its used radioactive fuel pool, which has clearly caught fire, is uncertain. Also unclear is the ability of the owners to sustain the stability of Units Five and Six, which were shut when the quake/tsunami hit.

That stability depends on continued power to run cooling systems, which could disappear amidst seismic aftershocks many believe are inevitable. A very substantial quake hit after the tremors that led to Indonesia's devastating tsunami, and few doubt it could happen again--soon--at Fukushima.

All the above is dependent on reports controlled primarily by Tokyo Electric and the Japanese government. There is every reason to believe the situation is worse than

it seems, and that those in charge don't really know the full extent of the damage or how to cope with it. Just five years ago a quake shut seven reactors at Kashiwazaki. The entire nation of Japan sits on a wide range of fault lines. Tsunami is a Japanese word.

Radiation from Fukushima has long since been detected throughout the northern hemisphere, with health effects that will be debated forever. Some fifty reactors still operate in Japan. According to some, the Japanese public has the legal right to shut them all off. Let us pray they do. Yesterday!

Los Alamos: A massive wildfire has swept at least to the outskirts of the national laboratory that was at the core of the program that built the Atomic Bomb.

Its first explosion irradiated a nearby valley on July 16, 1945. Then came the two that obliterated Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

There are significant quantities of stored radioactive material in and around Los Alamos. How much there is, where it is, how badly it is threatened, and how much (if any) has already been engulfed in flames remain to be seen. Evacuations are underway.

Official reassurances are not reliable. Nor are estimates of the potential for radioactive fallout to spread throughout North America and beyond.

Vermont Yankee: Entergy, owner of the one reactor in Vermont, has sued to shred a solemn public contract. The one thing certain here is the company's contempt for the sanctity of its own word.

**Whether the US will
now turn with Germany,
Japan, Italy, Switzerland,
Israel and others away
from atomic power and
toward a green-
powered Earth
is up to us.**

-- Harvey Wasserman

Years ago Entergy sought official permits at VY. It promised in return that the state could choose to shut the reactor on March 21, 2012, which it has now done. In recent years VY has spewed tritium into groundwater and the Connecticut River, in some cases from underground pipes whose existence the company denied. A cooling tower has collapsed.

But the Nuclear Regulatory Commission has extended the reactor's license and asked the federal Justice Department to intervene on behalf of the utility. The request trashes any credibility retained by the NRC. The Commission was established in the mid 1970s to be a disinterested party on which the public could rely. For it to now take a partisan stand on behalf of a reactor owner it is required to regulate thoroughly, contaminates the core of its existence.

Entergy has sued so it can buy some \$65 million in radioactive fuel the people of Vermont do not want burned on their land. This will go to the US Supreme Court, where the future legal sanctity of any and all public contracts signed by any corporation, nuclear or otherwise, may be determined.

Nebraska: The flooding Missouri River continues to threaten at least two heartland reactors. Late reports indicate Cooper may still be running, with public assurances it could be shut very quickly. What might happen if the operators are a little bit late has not been explained.

Nor is there much to go on about the impact of flooded cores and fuel cooling ponds on the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers or the eco-systems along the way to a Gulf of Mexico still reeling from BP's toxic dose.

But an almost surreal set of circumstances surrounds the true nature of design specifications and protections in place (or not) at Ft. Calhoun. They may be best summarized by what happened to a "flood berm" meant to protect Ft. Calhoun. This huge rubberized water-filled sausage was sixteen feet at the base and eight feet high.

But CNN has quoted a company representative as saying some sort of equipment "came in contact" with the berm and punctured it. Not to worry: the "same level of protection is in place" as had been prior to the installation of the berm. In other words, the device was installed to protect the reactor. Then somebody punctured it. But things are as they were before so they must not have needed that berm in the first place. Got it?

It's as yet unclear whether flood waters will continue to rise at these two reactors, whether the operators can protect them, and what will happen if they can't.

The corporate media is carrying virtually zero coverage of any of the above stories. All are subject to rapid, dangerous changes about which we may have little reliable information. But we do know for sure that US Senator Robert Casey, Jr. (D-PA) now wants to see more deeply into one of the key holes in the nuclear façade: evacuation.

After Three Mile Island's 1979 partial melt-down, new federal legislation gave states more power over how to get people out of the path of a melting nuke. But after an as-yet unopened Perry reactor was damaged by a 1986 earthquake, Ohio's then-Governor Richard Celeste

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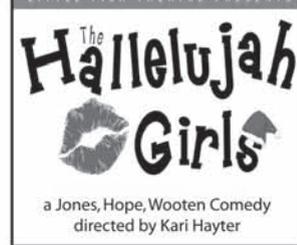


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sued to keep Perry shut pending a state evacuation study. The NRC refused and won in federal court. Perry opened. Ohio's official study then said evacuation was virtually impossible.

A quarter-century later, Casey wants to see what it might now take to move downwinders out of harm's way from a TMI, Perry, Chernobyl, Fukushima, Vermont Yankee, Cooper, Ft. Calhoun...you name it. Casey's being joined by New York Governor Andrew Cuomo, whose demands for the shut-down of Indian Point, 35 miles north of Manhattan, have left its owners "shaken."

Cuomo and Casey might do well to join governors of states like Vermont, Massachusetts, California and others in testing the law on evacuation planning. Populations have vastly increased at virtually all US reactor sites since TMI. And the ugly realities that define the so-called "Peaceful Atom" are still making themselves all too apparent.

Whether the US will now turn with Germany, Japan, Italy, Switzerland, Israel and others away from atomic power and toward a green-powered Earth is up to us. The Solartopian technologies of wind, solar, tidal, geothermal, ocean thermal, bio-fuels, increased efficiency and conservation are now demonstrably cheaper, safer, cleaner, more reliable, more job-producing and quicker to install than anything atomic energy can promise.

A \$36 billion loan guarantee give-away still mars the proposed 2012 federal budget. Constant pressure on Congress and the White House can kill that, and any other

proposed funding for still more of these nightmares. The stream of reactor disasters spewing from this dying industry is certain to escalate. The toll rises with each leak at Fukushima, every flame at Los Alamos, each legal brief at Vermont Yankee, every foot of Nebraska floodwater.

The need to stop the madness grows more desperate every day.

Harvey Wasserman's most recent book is *Solartopia* (Solartopia.org). Nukenfree.org.

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GMO TOXINS IN WOMEN AND FETUSES

JEFFREY M. SMITH

When U.S. regulators approved Monsanto's genetically modified "Bt" corn, they knew it would add a deadly poison into our food supply. That's what it was *designed* to do. The corn's DNA is equipped with a gene from soil bacteria called Bt (*Bacillus thuringiensis*) that produces the Bt-toxin. It's a pesticide; it breaks open the stomach of certain insects and kills them.

But Monsanto and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) swore up and down that it was only insects that would be hurt. The Bt-toxin, they claimed, would be completely destroyed in the human digestive system and not have *any* impact on all of us trusting corn-eating consumers. Oops. A study just proved them wrong.

Doctors at Sherbrooke University Hospital in Quebec found the corn's Bt-toxin in the blood of pregnant women and their babies, as well as in non-pregnant women. (Specifically, the toxin was identified in 93% of 30 pregnant women, 80% of umbilical blood in their babies, and 67% of 39 non-pregnant women.) The study has been accepted for publication in the peer reviewed journal *Reproductive Toxicology*.

According to the UK *Daily Mail*, this study, which "appears to blow a hole in" safety claims, "has triggered calls for a ban on imports and a total overhaul of the safety regime for genetically modified (GM) crops and food." Organizations from England to New Zealand are now calling for investigations and for GM crops to be halted due to the serious implications of this finding.

Links to other disorders

There's already plenty of evidence that the Bt-

toxin produced in GM corn and cotton plants is toxic to humans and mammals *and* triggers immune system responses. The fact that it flows through our blood supply, and that it passes through the placenta into fetuses, may help explain the rise in many disorders in the US since Bt crop varieties were first introduced in 1996.

In government-sponsored research in Italy, mice fed Monsanto's Bt corn showed a wide range of immune responses. Their elevated IgE and IgG antibodies, for example, are typically associated with allergies and infections. The mice had an increase in cytokines, which are associated with "allergic and inflammatory responses." The specific cytokines (interleukins) that were elevated are also higher in humans who suffer from a wide range of disorders, from arthritis and inflammatory bowel disease, to MS and cancer.

The young mice in the study also had elevated T cells (gamma delta), which are increased in people with asthma, and in children with food allergies, juvenile arthritis, and connective tissue diseases. The Bt corn that was fed to these mice, MON 810, produced the same Bt-toxin that was found in the blood of women and fetuses.

When rats were fed another of Monsanto's Bt corn varieties called MON 863, their immune systems were also activated, showing higher numbers of basophils, lymphocytes, and white blood cells. These can indicate possible allergies, infections, toxins, and various disease states including cancer. There were also signs of toxicity in the liver and kidneys.

Natural Bt is dangerous

Farmers have used Bt-toxin from soil bacteria as a natural pesticide for years. But they *spray* it on plants, where it washes off and biodegrades in sunlight. The GM version is built-in; every plant cell has its own spray bottle. The toxin doesn't wash off; it's consumed. Furthermore, the plant-produced version of the poison is thousands of times more concentrated than the spray; is designed to be even more toxic; and has properties of known allergens—it actually *fails* the World Health Organization's allergen screening tests.

The biotech companies ignore the substantial difference between the GM toxin and the natural bacteria version, and boldly claim that since the natural spray has a history of safe use in agriculture, it's therefore okay to put the poison directly into our food. But even this claim of safe use of Bt spray ignores peer-reviewed studies showing just the opposite.

**Now thousands of
Indian farm laborers
are suffering from the
same allergic and flu-
like symptoms as those
in the Pacific Northwest
simply from
handling genetically
engineered cotton
plants.**

-- Jeffrey M. Smith

When *natural* Bt-toxin was fed to mice, they had tissue damage, immune responses as powerful as cholera toxin, and even started reacting to other foods that were formerly harmless. Farm workers exposed to Bt also showed immune responses. The EPA's own expert Scientific Advisory Panel said that these mouse and farm worker studies "suggest that Bt proteins could act as antigenic and allergenic sources." But the EPA ignored the warnings. They also overlooked studies showing that about 500 people in Washington state and Vancouver showed allergic and flu-like symptoms while they were exposed to the spray when it was used to kill gypsy moths.

Bt cotton linked to allergies, deaths

Now thousands of Indian farm laborers are suffering from the same allergic and flu-like symptoms as those in the Pacific Northwest simply from handling genetically engineered cotton plants that produce Bt-toxin. According to reports and records from doctors, hospitals, and pharmacies, as well as numerous investigative reports and case studies, workers are struggling with constant itching and rashes; some take antihistamines every day in order to go to work. It gets worse.

When they allowed livestock to graze on the Bt cotton plants after harvest, thousands of sheep, goats, and buffalo died. Numerous others got sick. I visited one village where for seven to eight years they allowed their buffalo to graze on natural cotton plants without incident. But on January 3rd, 2008, they allowed their 13 buffalo to graze on Bt cotton plants for the first time. After just one

day's exposure, all died. The village also lost 26 goats and sheep.

One small study in Andhra Pradesh reported that all six sheep that grazed on Bt cotton plants died within a month, while the three controls fed natural cotton plants showed no adverse symptoms.

Pesticide factories inside us?

Getting back to the Bt-toxin now circulating in the blood of North American adults and newborns—how did it get there? The study's authors speculate that it was consumed in the normal diet of the Canadian middle class. They even suggest that the toxin may have come from eating meat from animals fed Bt corn—as most livestock are.

I'd like to speculate on another possible source. But I warn you, it's not pretty. The only human feeding study ever published on genetically modified organisms (GMOs) was conducted on Roundup Ready soybeans. Here's their back story: Scientists found bacteria growing in a chemical waste dump near their factory, surviving the presence of Monsanto's Roundup herbicide. The herbicide normally kills bacteria, but this organism had some special gene that allowed it to survive. So Monsanto scientists figured, "Let's put it into the food supply!"

By forcing that gene from that bacterium into soybean plants' DNA, the plants then survive an otherwise deadly dose of Roundup herbicide—hence the name Roundup Ready (see my article in the last issue of *AMASS*, #40).

In the human study, some of the subjects were



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found to have Roundup Ready gut bacteria! This means that sometime in the past, from eating one or more meals of GM soybeans, the gene that had been discovered in the chemical waste dump and forced into the soy, had transferred into the DNA of bacteria living inside their intestines—and continued to function. That means that long after we stop eating GMOs, we may still have dangerous GM proteins produced continuously inside of us.

When the results of the study emerged, the funding from the pro-GMO UK government mysteriously dried up, so they were not able to see if the same type of gene transfer happens with Bt genes from, say, corn chips. If it does, it means that eating Bt corn might turn our intestinal flora into living pesticide factories—continually manufacturing Bt-toxin from within our digestive systems.

I don't know of a test that can confirm that this is happening, but the Canada study may be showing the results—where Bt-toxins are found in the blood of a very high percentage of people. If the “living pesticide factory” hypothesis is correct, we might speculate even further. Bt-toxin breaks open the stomach of insects. Could it similarly be damaging the integrity of our digestive tracts? The biotech companies insist that Bt-toxin doesn't bind or interact with the intestinal walls of mammals, and therefore humans. But here too they ignore peer-reviewed published evidence showing that Bt-toxin *does* bind with mouse small intestines *and* with intestinal tissue from rhesus monkeys. In the former study, they even found “changes

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in the electrophysiological properties” of the organ after the Bt-toxin came into contact.

If Bt-toxins were causing leaky gut syndrome in newborns, the passage of undigested foods and toxins into the blood from the intestines could be devastating. Scientists speculate that it may lead to autoimmune diseases and food allergies. Furthermore, since the blood-brain barrier is not developed in newborns, toxins may enter the brain causing serious cognitive problems. Some healthcare practitioners and scientists are convinced that this is the apparent mechanism for autism.

Thus, if Bt genes were colonizing the bacteria living in the digestive tract of North Americans, we might see an increase in gastrointestinal problems, autoimmune diseases, food allergies, and childhood learning disorders—since 1996 when Bt crops came on the market. Physicians have told me that they indeed are seeing such an increase.

The discovery of Bt-toxin in our blood does not confirm all this speculation, but it does provide food for thought. And hopefully, that food is non-GMO.

Our Institute for Responsible Technology joins other organizations worldwide calling for an immediate ban on GM food crops, and the commencement of rigorous independent scientific research on the safety of GMOs in general, and Bt-toxin in particular.

Jeffrey M. Smith is the Executive Director of the Institute for Responsible Technology, and author of *Seeds of Deception*, and *Genetic Roulette*. ResponsibleTechnology.org.

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SUSPENDED AGITATION

JAMES HOWARD KUNSTLER

We all know “the five second rule.” Drop food on the floor and if you pick it up before that span of time elapses, it’ll still be “good.” There is also a life-and-death version of this: the five-day rule, by which we have surrendered to any U.S. President the right to kill people in our name, provided he only does it for a couple of days.

Woe is unto the world. It doesn’t know whether to shit or go blind. The rule of law has been replaced by Murphy’s Law. The story in Greece gets more and more curious. One of the latest proposals is to ask holders of Greek bonds to go along with a voluntary rollover, meaning we will pay you on Tuesday for a hamburger today, even though we already owe you for ten years of weekly hamburgers.

Odd how the financial innovation never ceases. This last great new idea: that bonds never really have to pay off, and will do wonders for the bond market everywhere. People will clamor for bonds that come with no clear terms and probably no redemptions. Now, the buzz around the cosmic meme-sphere is saying fuggedabout Greece, we’re gonna do the same thing with Portugal and its sillyass bonds. Enter China.

Europe is about to enjoy the greatest monetary Chinese fire drill ever staged. Wen Jiabao will wave a magic wand and the Euro will fly above mundane reality on dragon wings allowing everybody in Greece, Portugal, Spain, Ireland, and Italy to hold a senior management job at the motor vehicle bureau with retirement at 53. Then, with 80 percent of their former pay, they can open cafes where people still

working at the motor vehicle bureau can spend the better part of each afternoon sipping Ouzo and arguing politics, finance, sports...or just enjoying the antics of the boorish German tourists.

Meanwhile, Goldman Sachs’s man in Europe, Mario Draghi, will take a seat in Jean Trichet’s big chair at the European Central Bank around November of this year. It was Goldman Sachs, apparently, that erected a giant credit default swap house of cards for Europe to live in happily-ever-after-except in the event of a default accident, in which case Goldman Sachs would receive all the money ever printed on God’s green Earth, plus commissions, premiums, penalty payouts, interest, and bonuses... and homeless Europe would then be welcome to take a flying fuck at a rolling donut--or make that a strawberry

Bismarck! Personally, I don’t see how the various players can delay some sort of crisis until November. The European currency experiment is a bust and too many big banks are just plain insolvent. Can Wen Jiabao launch another flying dragon that seeds the European skies with counterparty payoffs that will rain down from Dublin to Athens and keep everybody happy?

Don’t get the idea that the USA can just occupy a grandstand seat and stuff its fat face with Cheez Doodles while the current act plays out in the center ring of the world financial circus. Plenty of intermingled American interests depend on how things work out over there, not the least of which is the fact that the International Monetary Fund is actually a proxy American bail-out operation. It worked just fine in the old days when its exertions focused on little

urchin nations like Swaziland, but wait until the Tea Party hears that America runs twelve thousand cafes for European motor vehicle bureaucrats to while away the afternoons drinking Ouzo in. (At least maybe we can get them to drink Old Mr. Boston anisette liqueur instead.)

Would it not improve the national character generally if our citizens spent MORE time arguing politics in cafes than lying on the couch watching a TV figment named “Snooki” throw standing crotch-locks on every unemployed forklift driver in the mythical kingdom of New Jersey?

-- James Howard Kunstler

It does prompt one to think we might try something like that here. Would it not improve the national character generally if our citizens spent more time arguing politics in cafes than lying on the couch watching a TV figment named “Snooki” throw standing crotch-locks on every unemployed forklift driver in the mythical kingdom of New Jersey?

If I were Barack Obama, I’d think twice about presiding over this irresolvable muddle of engineered swindles, sinking prospects, booby-trapped budgets, and played-out lies for another term. Let Hillary step in and try to keep this leaky Flying Dutchman out of the drink. She’s looking more and more like Winston Churchill physically every day now, anyway. Maybe she is acquiring something like his stolid habits of mind, too. If I were President Obama, I’d just call it quits and sign on with the home team: Goldman Sachs. He can have Mario Draghi’s old job--chief of the international division. They’ll love him in all those peculiar little countries where people wear hats that look like rat-traps and flavor their beer with the cocoons of nectar-sipping moths. They’ll enjoy it when he forecloses on them, and maybe even ask for more. “Here, take our grandchildren’s baby teeth, too!” I wish him and his beautiful family well in their new life as distinguished private citizens-of-the-world. I just hope Michele Bachmann and her probable running mate, Jesus, don’t steal the next election. They’ll rip out the Obamas’ vegetable garden and put a Nascar track there so that all of Ms. Bachmann’s 27 children can have jobs selling miniature bibles in the parking lot. (“Prayed over by *qualified* preachers twenty-four hours a day!”)

By the by, many observers were amused by last week’s cute trick of releasing sixty million barrels of oil from the world’s strategic reserves at the rate of two million-a-day in an effort to pretend that the world doesn’t have a basic oil production problem. It is, of course, at the bottom of the world’s financial disarray, because if you can’t increase energy inputs that feed an industrial economy you don’t get growth and then the whole idea of compound interest falls apart because it is predicated on a perpetual increase in wealth. Hence, debt collapses in on itself. The world is caught up in an epochal contraction now, and it manifests in situations like the Greek emergency. But soon it will be a universal emergency.

The lesson, if I may be tendentious for moment, is that the human race is welcome at any time to begin living differently, at a smaller scale, much more locally, with fewer automatic machines doing all the work for us, and more time spent on useful and necessary activities than on television fantasies. Got a problem with oil? Don’t imagine that you’re going to run WalMart--or, for that matter, Goldman Sachs--on wheat-straw distillates. Something is in the air this week and it is making a lot of people very nervous. If you loaded up the old investment portfolio with shale gas stocks, I feel especially sorry for you.

James Howard Kunstler’s recent book is *The Witch of Hebron*. Kunstler.com.

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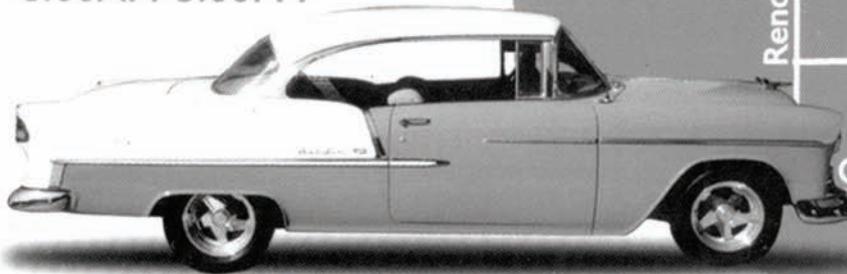
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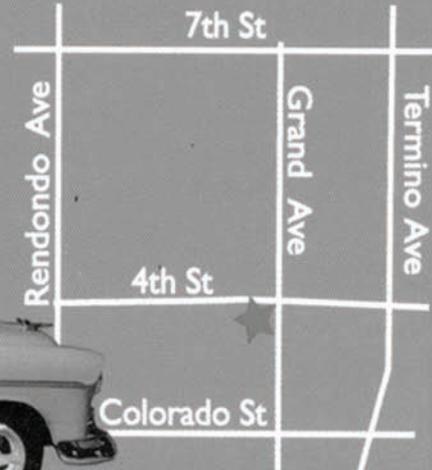
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OBAMA'S AFGHAN WITHDRAWAL

TOM HAYDEN

Two years ago I was on a Chicago panel with a just-retired military officer, Charles Tucker, a former top adviser to the US embassy in Iraq, general counsel to the Pentagon and a major general in the Air National Guard. During our debate, he made a statement worth remembering in light of Barack Obama's recent speech on Afghanistan:

"The only relevant debate in the next two years will be counterinsurgency versus counterterrorism. After that, Obama will begin surrendering to the peace movement."

I wasn't sure whether he liked the scenario he was describing, but I applauded him for providing me with a ray of hope. His prophecy is coming true. Obama, of course, is not "surrendering" to anyone, least of all the peace activists across the country, but he is responding to massive public pressure for rapid troop withdrawals from Afghanistan. We have crossed the line into de-escalation. The withdrawals will continue as the pressure, especially from voters during the 2012 election cycle, continues to build.

Peace advocates should feel a sense of gratification, not about the numbers involved but about contributing to the vast up-swelling of public opinion against Iraq and now Afghanistan, in spite of the fact that not a single network or mainstream newspaper has called for bringing our troops home. There is a magic about public opinion, which still matters despite the shadows of authoritarianism all around.

Let's be clear about what Obama said, since so many seem utterly unable to grasp the facts before issuing their condemnations. I write here as an organizer who believes a proper analysis of the situation and opportunities is critical in making any progress against the Leviathan we are up against.

First, Obama said he would withdraw 33,000 troops by next summer, twelve months away, which is a

new clarification. And he added that he would continue withdrawing troops after that. The conclusion we should reach is that we should push forward to withdraw more than 33,000 troops, and expect to be successful. There is a strategic opportunity, if the peace movement does its job, to demand more withdrawals during the key period of Democratic and Republican conventions next year, and during the presidential campaign itself. The political fight will continue through the 2011–12 election period.

This will happen in stages, because getting out of a military mess of your own making is one of the most difficult challenges confronting any Machiavellian (Read Clausewitz on redeployment). Obama will be trying to sell himself to peace voters while watching out for the military, as well as unpredictable pressures from Republicans, and facing military families who wonder just what this is all about. The context between now and November 2012 will be "kinetic," or fluid, a concept in warfare that can be applied to political battlefields as well.

The Peace and Justice Resource Center prediction that 30,000–33,000 troops would be withdrawn, based on interviews and research, has turned out to be accurate. The

PJRC supported withdrawing more than 33,000, however. Fifty thousand troops out by 2012 would have de-escalated the American occupation by half, gone beyond ending the present surge and would have broken the back of those who believe in endless war. Of course, a rapid withdrawal of all troops and bases was the preferred position of nearly all peace groups and networks across the country—and that should continue to be the goal. In addition, the peace movement should demand all troops out of Iraq, check Obama's executive ambitions towards Libya, oppose the secret war in Pakistan and Yemen and choke off all resources for the Long War of fifty to eighty years. The trillions that will be wasted on these wars should be reinvested primarily in our domestic needs, as America's mayors have recently insisted.

For me, the criteria for success in social movements are whether the participants feel they are (1) gaining mastery of ideas, approaches, strategies and tactics; (2) having a tangible impact on the powers-that-be and public opinion; (3) making measurable gains towards their goals, based on a growing organizational capacity; (4) making

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--Tom Hayden

everyday life better or more bearable; and (5) developing a sustaining movement culture and heritage. Crucial to the first one, I should clarify, is learning the arts of conflict resolution, which some call political jujitsu, including the ability to understand what an adversary needs to exit an untenable situation. I learned much in the “school” of the Northern Ireland peace process.

Finally, it is important that activists not acquire the habit of snatching defeat from the jaws of victory. Already the voices of negativity and alienation are out there, infecting the discourse with unwarranted cynicism and undermining any sense of achievement. Some said the speech was a “disappointment” and “heartbreaking” before it was delivered, mistakenly claiming that Obama was only withdrawing five or ten thousand troops. That would be another broken promise and would never happen. One blogger called the speech “outrageous,” while another opined that Obama would draw down troops only to escalate the wars with drones, which I believe she called the worst weapon in the history of the world...

Friends and, may I say, comrades: don’t disparage what your efforts have achieved. Don’t be surprised that gains we achieve are always less than we demand. Don’t forget that we are up against the institutional might of a superpower. Instead, dwell on this simple fact: we the people pushed them back. Then study and discuss where we go from here. If you say 33,000 is not enough, remember it’s ten times more than the generals wanted. Learn from our experience and set to work pushing 33,000 to 50,000 or more by the end of next year.

This de-escalation, and the further de-escalation down the road, is attributable to peace activism and public opinion. Our economic woes are a prime reason as well. But think about it. If public opinion was otherwise, was warlike, if peace groups were demonized and isolated, clearly American imperialism could soldier on, justifying terrible losses and budgetary costs as a price worth paying for empire. But public opinion has not been superheated with martial desire, though that desire is there. Instead 85 percent of Democrats, 55 percent of independents and 45 percent of Republicans seem to want a more rapid withdrawal than anyone in established leadership. Despite being marginalized by interest groups and the mainstream media, democracy is coming to the USA (Thank you, Leonard Cohen).

Social change is very slow—until it speeds up. Even revolutionaries have to fight step by step, until revolutions come by surprise. Institutions remain impermeable, until falling apart. We could be approaching such a moment, but only if we push, if we organize and prepare; if we light candles instead of cursing the darkness.

No one up there will credit the peace movement for anything, until someday in the future we learn they were scared to death of us. We alone have the power to take heart from our impact, or fall into further despair. And despair never organized anyone. As a historian and former Freedom Rider, I suggest we all learn from the African-American experience. Perhaps no people have been so cast out, so abused, so absolutely hopeless, and yet a



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community of resistance was formed out of sorrow which marched stage by stage towards dignity and equality. Frederick Douglass, for one, condemned Abraham Lincoln as a hopeless sellout, a racist, but slowly the struggle proceeded until Lincoln learned from Douglass, and Douglass appreciated Lincoln, while neither believed that black people could be redeemed by politicians. It was the North Star that mattered, and the transformation of suffering into soul power, movement-building and strategic alliances.

So I say congratulations to the crazy rainbow of peace networks out there who have fought the last two years to cut funding or force an exit strategy from Afghanistan. The quilt works. There is no single thread. The fiery women of Code Pink have been relentless on every front. Progressive Democrats of America have fostered networks on the left of the Democratic Party and linked the war to healthcare. The ACLU and Human Rights Watch, while not opposing the wars directly, have fought brilliantly against secret prisons, torture and detention. United for Peace and Justice led the mass mobilizations against Iraq and continue to battle on grassroots levels. Peace Action, Win Without War, the AFSC, the Institute for Policy Studies and recently the Afghanistan Study Group and New America Foundation have battled inside the Beltway. The National Priorities Project provides invaluable and usable information on the costs of war. Thanks to the Center for American Progress for finally coming around, and John Kerry too. Praise to Barbara Lee, Jim McGovern, Den-

nis Kucinich and the stalwart Russ Feingold. Pacifica, Amy Goodman and the Nation editors always made sure that information remains free and circulating. Wikileaks has blown away the walls of secrecy. Brave New Films has forced a rethink of Afghanistan with countless videos. Sojourners, the Tikkun community, the pastors and congregation at All Saints survived the intimidation and stood tall. The military families and Veterans for Peace lent moral credibility and urgency. Even the most sectarian and difficult groups have to be credited with putting people in the streets year after year. And my favorites are the small groups who have demonstrated on their neighborhood street corners every Friday for a decade, whatever the weather, knowing the sun also rises and night is never permanent.

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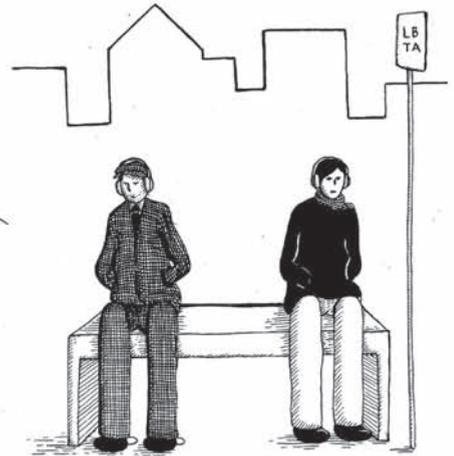
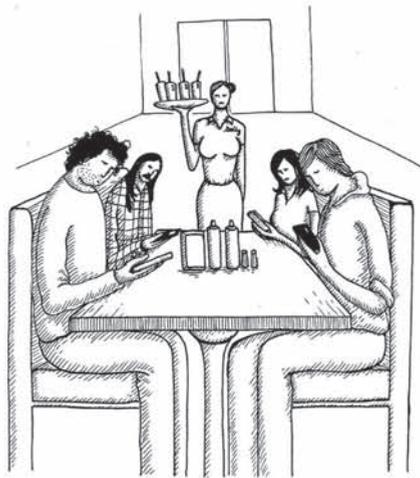
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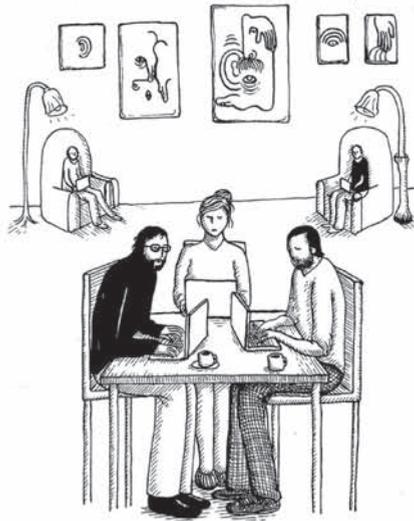


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OBAMA DAY!

MELINA PARIS

An event is being planned for the people of Long Beach by local business owner Charles Allen Williams, owner of Williams Boxing Fitness Gym on Pine Avenue in downtown Long Beach. It's a celebration of his inspired personal and professional life with the hope and inspiration revealed through the election of Barack Obama as the first black president. He wants to thank Mr. Obama for igniting the spark of hope through his message of unity, and share his gratitude by doing something good for the community on the President's birthday, August 4th.

Obama Day will bring together professional athletes, hip-hop and entertainment celebrities, the mayor and his assistant, the fire and police chiefs, members of the city council as well as the NAACP. There will be live music from various church choirs, African music, dancing performers, and a lot of great eating. Muhammad Ali has been invited as well, and of course our eminent President.

There's a fascinating story in how Coach Williams, as he is commonly known, arrived at this station on his journey to inspire others. He's done this by promoting self-awareness through training for the sport of boxing. Self-awareness can become a pathway to success in times when social conditions threaten your ability to realize your goals. Coach Williams began his journey in one of these moments, the civil rights era, when there was much hope for black Americans to battle the barriers to freedom, and continues now when the gains of civil rights are under attack and the recession has made it difficult for many to survive. He feels the inspiration from Obama's election can help many meet this challenge.

It's definitely helped him! Coach Williams feels the training and discipline of boxing can make us strong and self-aware and capable of doing incredible things. And this includes the idea of working together that he admires in Obama's philosophy. When we are self-aware and see better what we are capable of, then we can reach out and "find that common stake we all have in one another," in Mr. Obama's words ("A More Perfect Union"). The per-

son succeeds by working hard to access their strengths. He or she is transformed from investing in themselves through others in common ventures.

Charles learned the value of this early in his life as he faced considerable odds against success in the civil rights era. This was all about identity, his as well as that of black America. Finding your way through a society that wants to lose you is not easy. As Charles says, "Black people are the only people on earth who don't know their name!" And growing up in Mississippi named by his family's owners couldn't have been easy. So he and his family made it to Fort Dodge, Iowa when he was about five years old. This is where he began to pursue his destiny.

It's from his family heritage that he drew strength. Being nameless and forced to work free for others are not the best influences to begin this pursuit from, but the potential is there to build character. It seems Charles tapped into the persistence and discipline stored in his genes from slavery.

His paternal grandfather, Charles Williams, was a man of huge presence who lived to be ninety-seven years old. According to Charles' mother the man was built like Arnold Schwarzenegger. His robust form came from working as a slave, sun-up to sun-down in the Mississippi cotton fields. He also performed a daily ritual. He would punch his fists in boxing combinations around a single large leaf in the shape of the human face on the trunk of a shade tree every day at lunchtime.

Perhaps he was releasing his frustrations or anger, but there seems to be a larger purpose behind this ritual: refining skills that

would help him shape his direction in life. He also refined his hand speed and agility. He would place three half dollars on the back of his suspended hand and quickly jerk it back, sending the coins into the air, and forward again, catching the coins with his palm still face down before they hit the ground. A skillful trick passed down to Charles who still does it today, though he'll tell you he uses quarters.

Charles' father, Fred Newton Williams, also passed him some admirable skills. Around 1949 in Mississippi he tried to become an entrepreneur by hiring men to pick cotton and sell it to the town business men. These men started making \$18-\$20 per week and when the business men found out they punished him severely, and he

**...it was Ali that made
him see a picture of how
he could train others and it
was also Ali that talked
him into training his
youngest son Jeremy...**

--Melina Paris

nearly lost his life.

So it's no surprise with this DNA that Charles would become an exceptional athlete and go on to own and operate a successful business.

Back in Fort Dodge, Iowa Charles' physical prowess was apparent early on. One day while playing baseball during recess at Wakonsa Elementary School he slugged the ball up to the roof of the third-story school building. By lunchtime a fire truck arrived to retrieve the ball along with newsmen from the *Fort Dodge Messenger* ready to report on their local hero. Charles told me that he "felt good for the first time; a little bit." He was in the newspaper with his picture.

These types of events followed him all through his school years. He began boxing at twelve and developed a reputation for being very skilled at it. He was undefeated in wrestling. In football he once scored four touchdowns in one game. The citizens of Fort Dodge all knew and loved their exceptional young athlete.

At sixteen Charles survived a nearly fatal accident. While sparring with his trainer in the gym he was hit with a "number two" boxing combination, right in the nose. He was knocked out for a few seconds. When he came to he left, got on his motorcycle and after a few minutes of precarious riding he ran into a car that was backing out of a driveway. His lower leg and ankle were sandwiched between the bike and running board of the car, and badly injured. He passed out and had what he referred to as an out-of-body experience and saw himself lying on the street. He saw himself again in the ambulance and finally in the hospital bed, his mother praying next to him.

Due to the substandard medical care afforded minorities at that time, he was laid up for over six months. Since as an athlete his life revolved around training his body to perfection, this was difficult for him. It was easy for him to be angry, and he was. But he also had a lot of time to think, and he did, about his grandfather hitting those leaves on the tree in the boxing combinations, and catching those half dollars to sharpen his speed.

He wondered what it would be like to train and get the ability to do the hitting, not just get hit, using those boxing combinations in some way to teach people. He knew he was capable of assessing someone's physical capabilities quickly. His self-awareness was germinating; his purpose was becoming rooted. Coming through a near death experience with his visions, and being still about it, keeping his anger and pain to himself, forced him to meditate. And this transformed him. He flipped what could have been negative, accessing the strength of his mind and spirit. It brought him a feeling of new life and hope that he wanted to share with others.

After getting married and having three children, Charles decided to migrate to California. He'd heard from many people how plentiful work was here. He arrived in Long Beach in the mid-sixties and operated his own highly successful window washing business for several years. During the late 1970's he heard about Seaside Gym, a boxing gym here in town. It was there that he met Ali, for

the *second* time.

But sure enough Ali remembered him from a chance meeting they had some twenty years earlier back in Davenport, Iowa. They formed a friendship that has lasted through the years. The two had a meeting of the minds in terms of the training, strategy and technique used in those boxing combinations passed down from Charles' grandfather. According to Charles it was Ali who suggested how he could train others, and it was also Ali who talked him into training his youngest son Jeremy who holds four national championships and three world records.

Coach Williams opened Williams Boxing Fitness Gym in 1982. Muhammad Ali was an integral part of its genesis and attended the grand opening. There were many naysayers in the press and police department when Charles informed them Ali was to be there. In fact, because of this doubt Ali, true to form, decided to enlighten the skeptics and promptly sent a fax to the gym informing everyone that he would be there "unless President Reagan calls or I'm dead!"

Charles has great admiration and respect for Muhammad Ali. The compassion he has for humanity, what he's made of himself and how he's encouraged others to harness their strength of mind. "Hearing Cassius Clay talk was unbelievable," he said. He was really inspired with his idea that "Nobody can hurt me!" This was because it took the idea of self-awareness to the extreme, building on the influences from his father and grandfather. And this overlaps with President Obama's idea that we should help our-

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selves and never stop striving to “write our own destiny.”

Coach Williams and Ali both believe in teaching all willing subjects the techniques, strategy and self-confidence gained from the training so that they can develop this mindset. It “gets people over the fear of getting hit and they see how far they can go from there.”

His numerous records and awards, and those of his son, attest to this. He’s a three-time Olympic boxing coach and has two world records in coaching. Jeremy won Most Outstanding Boxer in the World in 1992. In 1989 he won the Junior National Championship. He broke Mike Tyson’s record of an 8.2 second knockout in 7.9 seconds. In 1990 they won All American Team First Place, and the Gold Medal at the Goodwill Games. The list goes on.

But Charles believes that the self-awareness gained should work throughout the community, not just deliver personal success. His desire is for everyone in the city to weave their strengths together and uplift each other; coexist in peace and unity. He believes kids of all races and religions can get along and live peacefully, and that mastering his boxing combinations will help with this goal. If this sounds a bit idealistic, it’s really only another variation on President Obama’s message of hope. He wants every kid in town to own one of his posters and learn how to use it.

These posters are basically charts that take the user through a series of aerobic, shadow-boxing exercises and teach mental focus and physical stamina for the up-

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per body. These exercises are meant for boxers in training but also for anyone who wants to improve their perceptive skills. The poster shows how to throw several sets of combination punches, with each number pertaining to a point on the face. An example would be 5, 7, 4 - 8, 4, 8, which coach Williams says is the most popular combination punch in the boxing world. The points on each side of the face that the numbers refer to are chin, chin, jaw-jaw, jaw, jaw.

It’s a priceless skill to have. If the Coach got his wish, every kid in the world would have a poster and use it religiously. These exercises introduce a common language for all of them to communicate with, rather than simply a preparation to use force to fight each other over perceived differences. It’s just good common sense, and it gives kids something of value to share among themselves.

Coach tutors and guides them with the same common sense, and they respect him. It’s exciting to watch him at work. He moves fluidly around the gym, his eyes on what each person is doing from the ring to the weight room, noticing everything, motivating everyone while remaining easy to approach. He encourages a very serious regimen, firmly instructing the kids on form, stance, and eye discipline. But it’s given with humor and love amid a sensual feast of sound and sight. The inspirational music is plentiful inside the gym; loud decibels with familiar choruses that let you know you can handle the Williams’ regimen. And the hundreds of pictures on the walls of famous boxing bouts, the numerous awards fighters hold, the beautiful pictures of Ali fighting in his prime, and the

proud shots of Coach Williams with his champion son Jeremy at his winning matches, complete the inspiring scene.

Coach Williams' efforts in the gym have paid off in keeping kids off the streets, but they've also been successful beyond its walls. He was instrumental in starting the Long Beach Police Athletic League (P.A.L.) for boys and girls. Williams Boxing and Fitness Gym and the California Conference for Equality and Justice (CCEJ) hosted dialogues between teens and the city's police officers to develop better communication and provide a safer environment.

As a banner hanging in the gym says, Coach Williams' life story is all out inspiring! Indeed. That inspiration reaches countless kids and adults that he trains because he has great compassion for them. He engages with all students from the heart and shows them what they're capable of. He told me he is grateful he has the opportunity to bring "Obama Day" here before he's gone because the message of hope and unity from the President will help his efforts. His wish is to make it an historical event for Long Beach so that his kids can carry on the legacy and make an imprint in the community. It seems he wants to spread the seed of inspiration forever, the mark of an evolved soul in this writer's humble opinion!

Come to celebrate the unity and peace that is ours to have and share, and participate in the historical imprint Obama Day will bring to our diverse city by the sea. Williams Boxing Fitness Gym is located at 745 Pine Ave. www.boxingymlongbeach.com

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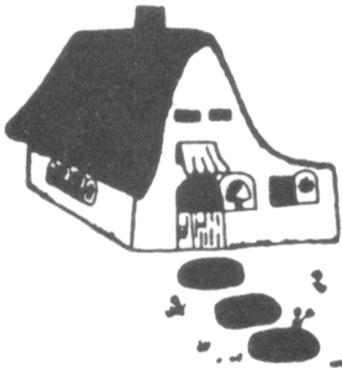


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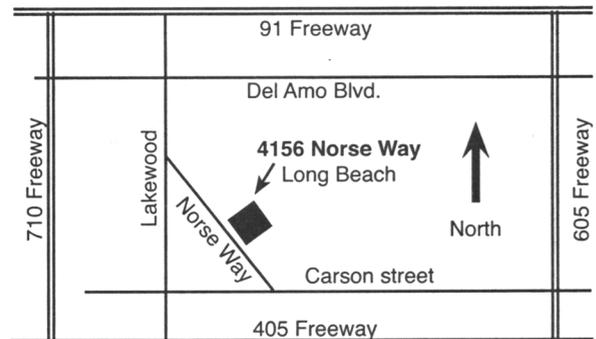
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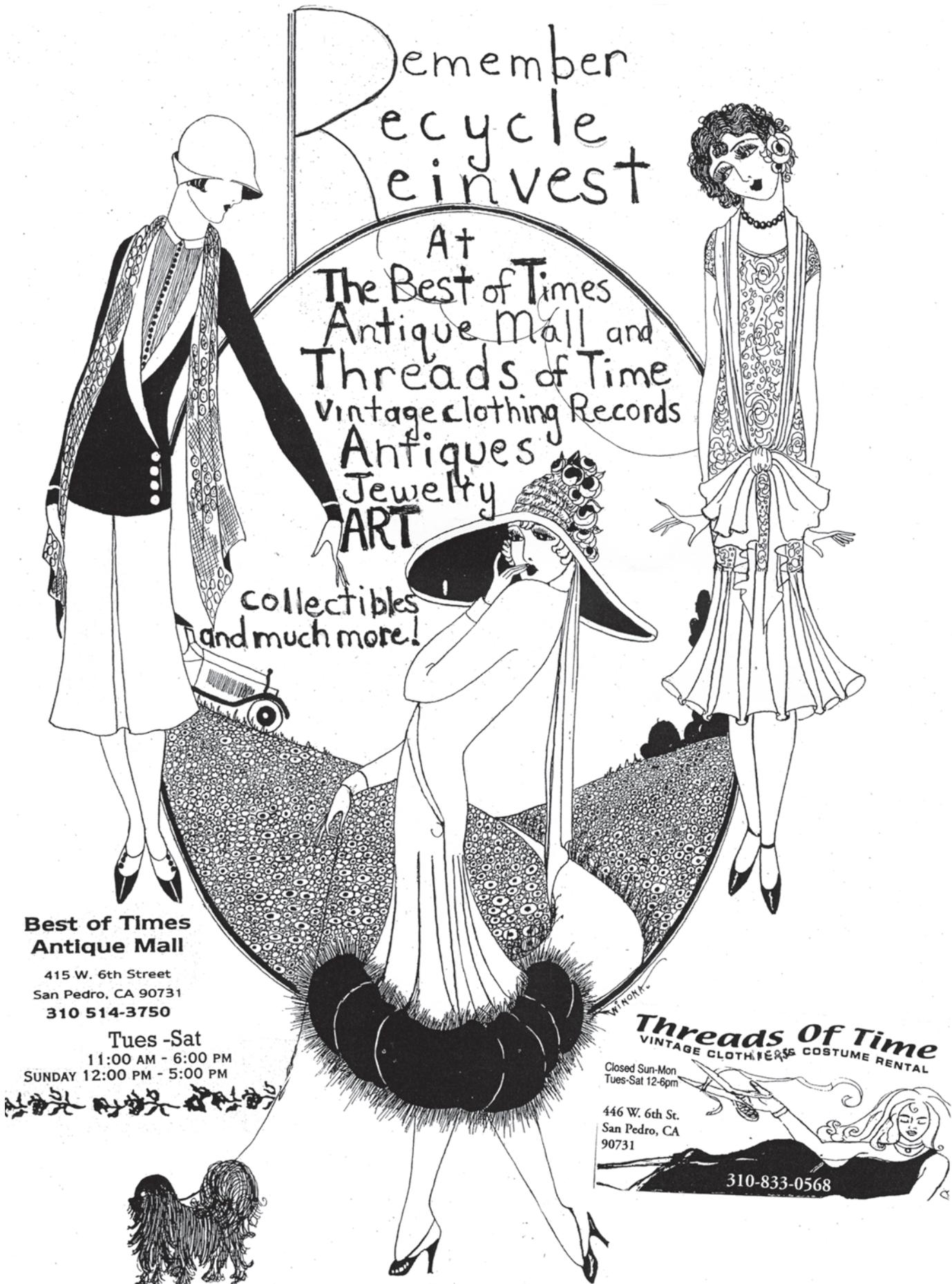
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ART HAUNTS

JOHN O'KANE

As we await the upgrade of filter-down economics to spread around town and touch someone, what better moment to fill in the furlough days or forlorn nights than with trips to that museum or cultural event there was little time for when the times were good. Culture can make life worth living when we question the value of it all and just need a spiritual boost to cope with the lack of answers.

Sponto Gallery in Venice is the perfect answer. It isn't your usual art hustle haunt with valeted openings that cater to an in-crowd. There are usually plenty of pics on the walls to view most any time, even in the wee hours if Mark Sponto, the gallery's owner, is available. But the whole experience is the attraction. It sheds new light on what culture means.

The gallery has become a scene over the years, mostly because of its fascinating history. It sits on the site of the Venice West Café, one of the most popular gathering spots for Beat/Bohemian Venice from the late 50s through the mid-60s. Sponto actually fashioned the space to resemble this café when he founded it in 1986. Many of the customers have some sense of this history, as well as the values that made it. These are loosely linked to the idea of living a lifestyle counter to the "rat race" of mainstream life that stresses a material and self-centered existence. Their grasp of what this all means can be more in the gut than in the mind, but they're pumped by the experience of the openings and the desire to be part of a special slice of the past. It's real!...

Just ask Viva, who happened upon Sponto's one day on her way to visit a friend at Sexetera next to The Shul on the Beach down the Boardwalk.

"They make me feel like something important is happening...my expectations are high from the mix of people and the conversation...and often it's like I was here before but sometimes like I'm visiting from the past...then there's the moments that are just too much!"

A fair rendering of what grabs many about a Sponto opening. Sponto's thrives on these moments. The notion that life can and should be experienced as a series

of moments is central to alternative thinking, and seminal to the lifestyle of the extended and continuing Venice West generation. A lofty goal for sure, but we have to wonder where these moments come from and what they're all about. Do they lay scattered on the surface of society ready to be snapped up by interested parties? Are they disguised, accessible only to the well-trained and keenly-aware? Are they only in the minds of their creators, and the eyes of their beholders, relative fancies that erupt despite what's in, or on the surface of, reality? If so then it probably helps if you sampled Coleridge in college, or had a better connection than most.

But the idea is that with practice and a good attitude you could make the opiates to expand your awareness of space and time, and their relation, to face off with dreary reality. A shared venture between mind and world, these moments were about changing your mindset toward what is; learning to discover and create, produce an aura around

the world and events. Proficiency brought a rush of moments and new guidelines for experiencing the world.

These moments were driven by the belief that society could use lots of improvement. It's no accident that the backdrop for their eruption is Eisenhower's zombied 50s, times felt to be extremely sterile and conformist, excessively deadbeat, when many had to see how much better things could be. Sensitive souls could spy the gap and even act out remedies in the faces of the clueless.

Everything was out there for the initiated to see. It was just happening! The sterile black-and-white world was aglow

with every color on the spectrum. It was like society's structural plates were rubbing against each other at such conflicting angles and with such force that clear and relevant pictures of reality accidentally surfaced. Imagine a weather-stained, sun-warped image on your aging water heater that one day, through some assemblage of forces, becomes the Madonna against which all known replicas pale.

This movement of forces created seers from those who were eager believers and whose hearts and heads were reasonably privy to what this was all about. And while there was no clear consensus, this insight wasn't convertible to a common currency anyway. Experiencing moments wasn't something you could rap about before coming to consensus. Even if you could explain them you

Imagine a weather-stained, sun-warped image on your aging water heater that one day, through some assemblage of forces, becomes the Madonna against which all known replicas pale.

--John O'Kane

didn't because that could mean you missed it all. When you were in one you were enveloped in a haze of high and on top of the world; all worries fell by the wayside. Your vision was cool and clear about how hopeless the zombied world was.

These moments are not all that common these days because, for one, the contrast between the upbeat ideal and the deadbeat reality doesn't appear to be as great. Advertisers can synthesize virtually any fact or fantasy into a shorthand newspeak of varied and glowing colors for personal use. Many may still have the power to spy the persisting gap between the way it is and the way it should be, but they're overwhelmed by appearances.

And many of these seekers have been there and done that. They can get anything they want at Alice's Restaurant or other venues, and nothing will likely surprise them very much. So they settle for a quickie nirvana.

But no matter how murky the signs may be, or how sated the seers and seekers appear, they feel like they can still grasp what's meaningful. And in California life flows so well that moments can already be in your peripheral vision. Our uncontrollable natural substances make sure you don't miss a beat. Sponto's site is where various chemicals conspire to create the highest possible concentration of energy at any given moment.

Adliberation

Viva's right, something definitely happens at a Sponto opening, though early on it can seem like you've wandered into a reunion for a 60s Happening that's being

rehearsed in slomo. The voices even distort, like when that overspliced copy of your favorite 16mm classic reverts to celluloid spaghetti. It can get so slow that your field of vision becomes a mess of freeze frames that only start to get fluid as the night wears on and talk amplifies the vibes into good vibrations.

So you may not know you're in one until the next morning when those vibes are like an erotic dream you waited too long to write down. The Sponto scene simply lacks a core of catalysts like those from that original one in the 50s to make it happen. A few candidates may lurk in the shadows ready to redirect their energy into alternative frequencies, but there's a shortage of comrades to work up some synergy with. So they come to the gatherings and let it happen; ready to prep their personas but mostly settle for the facsimile.

Viva's onto something. The past has a palpable presence here and it's tempting to believe that Sponto's is haunted by these predecessors. Yet what kind of spirits would want to spend time in this scene? If the original one was all that it's been cracked up to be, then we can imagine how jaded they're likely to be toward this one.

But then why do spirits linger in certain places, and how? As some classic hauntings reveal, a sense of violation is at the core. The subjects not only didn't want to exit this world. They were forced out through unnatural means; violently taken from it.

For example, when a house is built on top of an Indian burial mound the sleeping spirits, already restless and perhaps not all that enthused about the reception they



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got from missionaries about their religious practices, are likely to lash out at the invaders and treat them as aliens, finding any way they can to get their goad through the most annoying otherworldly means.

Or, given the incidence of domestic violence these days, there's bound to be a fair number of family members who exited before their time that would love to be born again and take an eye for an eye. Though their desire for justice is likely so strong they'll spook any residents living at the scene of the crime until the end of time, and these could be many with the number of property transfers set in motion by foreclosures (not unrelated to family friction!).

Gentrification is closely connected to property transfers in Venice, as well as evictions of those wanting to own real estate themselves, since the way must be cleared for rehabbed structures and new condos. Violence against the evictees rarely results in death, but can leave some awfully angry victims whose lives become deadened. Their passionate resentment at being displaced can remain in the rehabbed house, or in the dozered void that will cohabit with the new structure, separate from their bodies when they move and spiritualize in nightly vendettas against the new residents. We could say they're ghosts created by an improvement and transfer machine that critics of gentrification say can't bring quality renewal.

The "ghost in the machine" is something irrational and unpredictable in a process that's driven by the momentum of rational perfection, and ignores what matters.

Those earlier residents' spirits must linger in

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Sponto's since they didn't want to stop hanging at the Venice West Café. They were constantly threatened with expulsion, and eventually forced out in 1966. But they surely bear no grudges against their current-day counterparts. If they're upset for being displaced they're probably also pretty clear about who the real enemy is, and quite glad their story continues. And so their sense of violation is probably tempered with respect for all victims of maddening improvement schemes. While bound therefore to be somewhat unpredictable, they're certainly not your usual ghoulish vigilantes without a cause, spooking anyone at will.

You can't then count on them always making the scene, and when they do come you can easily miss them. The intense moments can be few and far between, habituating residents to some pretty bland substitutes. Though there is something to be said for unpredictability. When these spirits do arrive it seems they can circulate through the crowd and possess the unlikeliest of suspects. And on any given evening this possession might have unintended consequences, even reverse the tension between haunter and hauntee and make you feel like you're repossessing the past and its spirits.

The creative craft of flipping out, familiar from those early days, is actually what's replaced the vintage attitudes. If moments are not appearing on cue, the idea is to try and anticipate how circumstances might ideally converge and act accordingly. Since you can't just hang back and wait on fate to do your bidding, conjure them from whatever you got. The flipped usually feel society sucks so bad they stop trying to make sense of it. Yet they're ethically one-up on most because they believe in and want something better, and feel that a credible script will re-

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turn with a vengeance and interrupt the flow when they least expect it. Therefore they can fudge it a while until the randomness approximates a message. Before then the power must default to the messenger who slips ever so carefully into self-fulfilling prophecy, lusting after the moment catch-as-catch-can.

Spontaneity

A Sponto event can get you to flip in formation. It depends on the convergences within a pretty diverse playing field. There's the community gathering potlucked with good conversation, culinary delights and pictures renowned artists would proudly add to their oeuvre, though they do just fine on these authors' walls; even validate their distaste for the art hustle.

The events are especially lively during the summer and winter Solstices, all day affairs for nuclear, extended, communal and emergent families to celebrate in seasonal rhythm. They invite us to participate in something greater.

Openings for loved local artists are usually pretty similar but will vary depending on the crowd ambiance, always influenced by seasonal moon alignments, the hors d'oeuvres, day of the week, if the weather means another trip with the downcoat, or whether Murphy's Law finds the event especially worthy. The LA Louver Gallery, located in a valeted artery south of the Circle near the beach, can be a synergy killer if a famous import opens on the same night, a scene scoring so many amenities that community can wait.

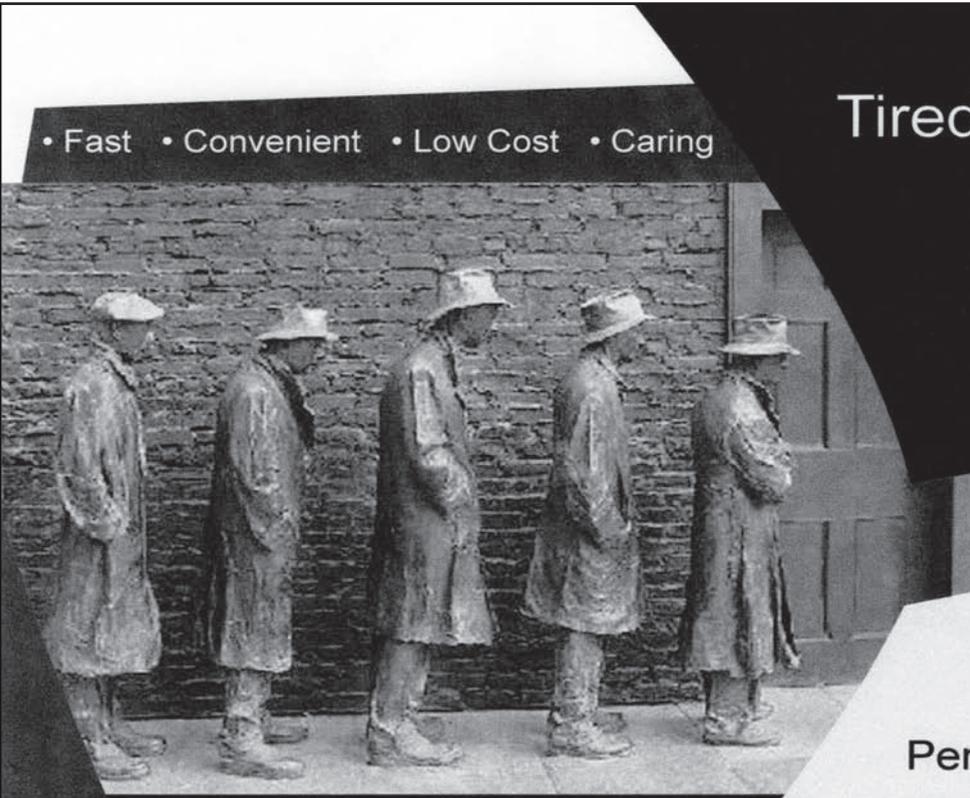
All other things being equal, an opening for an artist like Bruce Meade draws droves of passionate fans, making us feel like we've been transported to another time and place until the LAPD's finest drops in to remind us otherwise. Bruce deserves a show at the LA Louver but he will probably have to export himself out of town first.

Sponto has his imports too, filler between events, quantities known to someone in the media that matters and who usually have some link to the entertainment industry and are slumming it for a few months awaiting the bump to Bergamot. Since we're used to getting bypassed by the ad-rich press anyway, most miss the advance notice of these openings. Word of mouth brings in a few, but many stumble on them by accident. A good number give it a few gawks and head around the corner to the Bistro once they realize they're actually no longer in Venice. The vets of gallery gazing hang and juggle the chitchat while trying not to be too obvious about flashing on the cleaving celebs between double-takes of the fleshy price tags. It's flipping turned inside out. The moments deflate and the rap slips into il-sequitured lip-razz.

Then there's the opening with no publicity for someone you never heard of whose resume is conspicuous by its absence. The price list, you overhear, is still being printed. And to deepen the mystery the celeb rumored to drop in, who few have heard of either, got lost on the 405 and won't make it until later in the evening. So you bypass the pics and hit the jug wine in the rear, scoping out the scene. With the burden of studying the figures and forms lifted, all that head work to connect the smudges and dots,

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the surplus energy gets the conversations flowing. And then the Who's Who of Venice's shadow Cabinet might roll in, moments when Sponto himself usually makes the scene.

There's Sponto now getting up his finest opening mantra to deal an aspiring mannequin. I weave my way from the entry toward the back, trying to get his attention when Celsa, a performance artist from Oakwood, palms her card.

"Come to Abbot's Habit next weekend and you won't be sorry...doin my usual."

Before I can ask what that is, Harley appears with some Lyndon Larouche flyers. He graces us with a welter of information about the Bush family's ties to the Nazis as Rick, carrying the current Beachhead, approaches the fringe sending Harley into a tizzy about all the trashy language in our free monthly. This has a calming influence on the small group. Activity ceases and conversations mute, until Ralphy dances through it, dispersing the members in a buzz of chatter that's followed by what seems to be an interest in the art. A few here and there peek at the pics on the wall while others slip into the back room. After about ten minutes of barely audible murmurs, overlapping bits of clarity erupt.

"David somebody...from over on Brooks."

"...kind of like he...at the edge of..."

"Look at that belly-flopped bird bathing in..."

"...came from Hong Kong, friend of Astrid's who hangs over at the Circle...was on the street for a while."

Since by this time Sponto's out to the garden for

some herbal refreshment, I look for flare-ups in the hottest talkspots. The best bet is an animated sign language session near the piano presided over by Will, one of our ablest orators on the fate of anything about civilization. His charisma thrives mostly in body movements and power-pulsing ties so astutely orchestrated that words are beside the point. As I close in he's giving lyrical accompaniment to his pantomime. But it's very difficult to decipher at first through his mesmerizing gestures.

"...just the other day...nobody gives a damn anymore!...why aren't people doing something about that atrocity over at Lincoln Place?...dead people!...who said it can't happen here?...there's no hope for the republic... voting just leads to more apathy...we need to secede from LA, take charge of development and..."

"...what about the Peace and Freedom Party?"

Esther manages to blurt, deflating Will's momentum, sufficiently so that she can grab the stage. And once she gets into it Will's gyrations become sprays of apology.

"Our only hope....they run whom we need to keep this place from becoming Santa Monica...one of the few organizations left these days that's practicing real democracy."

Wyatt, who's taking it in from the fringe, leaps into the fray with feverish confidence, barely able to look at Will. "They're leftists!...only thing they'll do for us is bring more government and more intellectuals who think they're better than the rest of us!"...

Excerpted from *Venice, CA: A City-State of Mind* (2011).

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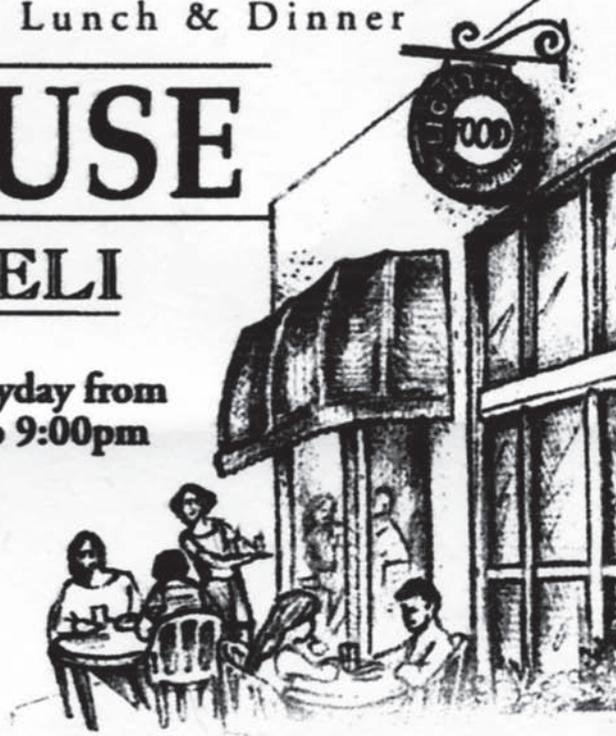
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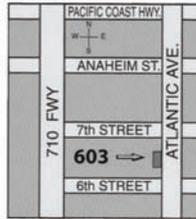
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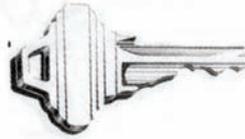
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aforethought
retrospectively speaking of the
intelligence that can't be found
at all.*

— Mort Subiet

~ Before ~

When only the homeless have an
honest place to reside
and just before all is lost to greed,
ignorance and desperation
perhaps it will be left to the deaf,
the mute, and the blind to lead
us,
the eternal left behind, back to our
gardens of Eden

For when eternal wisdom and
common sense, along with the
sky,
the seven seas, and the sands of
time have been turned to dross
only the deaf, the mute and the
blind will have been left
relatively uncontaminated by
mankind's greatest disability

And although I firmly disapprove
of monarchies
I cannot help but want to ponder
the questions
regarding what might have
happened had we lost the war
over what might have become the
Queen Mother of colonies

And had we, the festering spawn,
become subjective
under a his or her royal majesties
dominion
what might have ensued upon this
sacred soil?



Where native American Indians
might have prospered
within spiritual stewardship of a
then unblemished land
instead of fending off the
onslaught of foreign infestation
preceding their own inevitable
massacre

Republicans masquerading as
Democrats,
white collars pretending to be
black ties
within an unsociable caucus of
self-interest

The Treaty of Westphalia is
rendered useless,
diplomacy and reason have been
replaced
preemptively altering the face of
Democracy
and there is nothing cosmetic
about it

Patterns in the timeline support
the identification of habits
while other markers of
intentionality are spreading the
news
throughout the highest levels
before the general public
inhales these redolent fumes of a
newly found "freedom"

The last ground zero is recalling
an endangered species running
our planet on diplomatic sand
drifting in a catabatic wind

A Dead Sea rumored tale:

Of Templars scything blades aside
some frantic Moslem assassins
trance
depicting an absolute symbolic
form

In dreams envisioning martyr's
blood
in this walkabout, and sniff about
the trapped-back door to Paradise

Check it out, listen to it, and smell
it well,
but please avoid touching another
strand
of this Chthonic vision of
acronymic
forget-me-nots on their way to
oblivion

~ During ~

Space will host the next
preemptive crusade
harboring armed astronauts
leading the charge

toward a military superiority in
space ~
a distant realm of the nearly
unimaginable

The tectonic plates shift as the
poles melt,
earth-ball point lubricant siphoned
off shore
into deep-pockets of manipulation
and greed

Earthworks toward an
incomprehensible treaty
preventing this militarization of
outer space
is a peaceful program based on
terra firma

Yet under what rock
is our Whole Earth
now catalogued?

~ & AfterAll ~

No need to travel to Tibet to find
Buddha,
or sail across the Pacific to Japan
to find Zen
as they are not lost deep within us

No need to hang out with Freud

or Jung
to discover some Reichian
Orgone-visibility
taking snapshot pictures of our
souls

No need to waste this precious
time aloft
“seeking” the essentials of
enlightenment,
as most assuredly they cannot be
“found”

We never leave our spaceship-
house of worship,
it follows us around wherever we
go, or don't
without an “I, me, or a mine” to
worry about

Everything unimaginable is just a
breath away,
distinctions no longer necessary
to “see” beyond
nor need for some passport red,
white or blue

An etheric visa was stamped
directly onto our DNA
somewhere in the midwifery
between this and that
with nothing at all and everything
else in between

Our cellular connections are
biophysical,
our GPS units are an inherited
trait
and the only palms we own are in
our hands

Life is what dreams are made up
of
and though longevity is desirable,
survival is perfectly impossible

I believe we are either a part of
“the problem”
or we're not and that beyond this
simple equation,
there really is no “solution”

Don't regret the future & afterall,
ours might be the last generation
to remember anything but the
future

Yet now that this “future” has
arrived
I find it astounding how strongly
it resembles the past.

Hammond Guthrie is the author of
AsEverWas...Memoirs of a Beat Survivor,
and archivist for *The 3rd Page: A
Journal of Ongrowing Natures*.



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FOX REVIVES "SOCIALIST" MYTH

SOLANGE UWIMANA

There's no surer indication that Fox has entered full campaign season than seeing recycled attacks on President Obama explode all over the network. Though attacks on Obama are not uncommon on Fox, in the past few weeks hosts and guests have resurrected one of the old myths of campaign 2008--that Obama, as contributor Steve Moore put it, is "driven by an ideology that says redistribute the income."

Though Moore prefaced his remarks by saying, "I don't know President Obama very well, personally. I've met him once or twice," he nevertheless continued:

"I believe that...everything this president has done has really been about redistributing income from rich people to poor people. Instead of growing the economy and creating wealth, they want to redistribute wealth. That's why he wants to tax the people who make over \$250,000. That's why he wants to, you know, have the high tax on corporations."

Bill O'Reilly furthered the

myth on his show as well, saying to Republican Sen. Jim DeMint, "Is there an element in your opinion of income redistribution here--because I firmly believe that the president sees American society in a way that the wealthy have an obligation to help those who don't have a lot. And therefore," he continued, "if we raise the tax rates on the wealthy, that income redistribution--and that's what Obamacare is all about--kicks in." O'Reilly then went on to advocate for the Republican idea of a flat tax.

If you'll recall, this myth was a staple of right-wing media attacks on Obama in October 2008, based in part on a Drudge Report falsehood. Fox aggressively promoted the false story, with Sean Hannity blasting it far and wide. We now

know, of course, that an effort was underway at Fox at the time to tie Obama to socialism in the month leading up to the presidential election--an effort that often tracked claims that Obama was driven by a desire to "redistribute wealth."

If you'll recall, this myth was a staple of right-wing media attacks on Obama in October 2008, based in part on a Drudge Report falsehood.

--Solange Uwimana

It's worth asking whether a similar effort is underway at this very moment. This falsehood appeared on Fox no less than three separate times recently, with Eric Bolling devoting the first 10 minutes of his Fox Business show to advancing the myth that Obama is "spreading socialism." Bolling used White House press secretary Jay Carney's recent comments that Americans

"want us to get something done that's sensible, that spreads the sacrifice and spreads the prosperity," to say, "Hmm, spreading the prosperity sounds a lot like spreading the wealth...Spread the wealth, spread the prosperity."

Bolling hosted Ann Coulter, who furthered the attack on Obama, agreeing with Bolling's suggestion that "spread the prosperity" is "some sort of code" for "progressive socialism." Coulter replied in part by saying:

"There's no reason for the government to be controlling our pensions or our public schools or even the mail, rather than private systems. But as I describe in *Demonic*, it goes back to the French Revolution and Robespierre. Some men will always feel like they're in possession of the general will and if only they can control everything, they'll know how to distribute it just fine--well, as with

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Obamacare.”

Bolling then suggested that Obama is moving the country toward a system where “it’s in the government’s hands and don’t worry, they’ll take care of you if you need help. We’ll get you a house, a car, and maybe even a pony.” Coulter agreed, saying that “there’s no question that the country is becoming more socialist under Obama.”

In a later segment with former Rep. Alan Grayson, Bolling suggested that the government would have to subsidize the lifestyle of middle class families, including paying for a home, a car, health care, and a pension. At one point, he added, “Where’s the pony?...I want a baseball team. Can’t I have a baseball team?”

Likewise, on Fox’s America’s Nightly Scoreboard, host David Asman accused the Obama administration of purportedly being “more interested in income redistribution than they are in creating jobs.” And on Varney & Co., Fox Business anchor Tracy Byrnes called the idea of “spread-

ing some of this difficulty around,” “socialist crap,” adding, “You don’t want the country to become that. You do not want this country to become that--this distribution of wealth has got to stop. The notion that I should--you know, we should all feel the same pain? I work really hard.”

Other recent examples include Lou Dobbs: “[T]he government is talking about redistribution of wealth. The President makes no secret of it. He’s talked about redistribution of wealth.” Dobbs later suggested Obama is engaging in “class warfare.” [Lou Dobbs Tonight, 7/1/11]

Steven Hayes: “President Obama has clearly been one of the most left-wing presidents certainly in the past 50 years, I would argue in the past century in terms of what he has done to expand the size and scope of Government, to redistribute income here at home, to redistribute power abroad.” [The Willis Report, 7/1/11]

Stuart Varney: “I don’t think that the President can change course and I don’t think he will change

course...If you roll back all these tax increases and attach proposals then you’re getting and cutting right to the heart of the President’s wealth redistribution program.” [The O’Reilly Factor, 6/29/11]

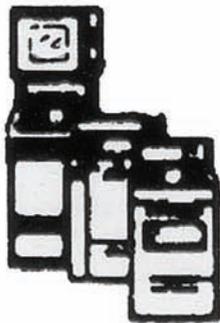
Sean Hannity: “Isn’t the biggest problem that the economy has failed under this Keynesian socialist, redistributed model of the President?” [Hannity, 6/20/11]

Glenn Beck: “Today with our various programs, our regulations, our tax policies, the government is trying to redistribute the wealth and keep people from failing. They’re going to fail. I have a right to fail. But honestly, it is in my failing that I found my salvation. It is an effort to make everyone equal in their possessions and it is wrong. We see it with ObamaCare. We see it--watch this--from the President in higher taxes for the wealthy.” [Glenn Beck, 6/15/11]

Solange Uwimana is a columnist for MediaMatters.org from which this story is excerpted.

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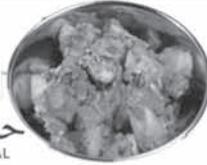


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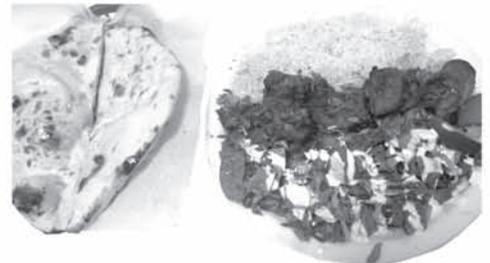
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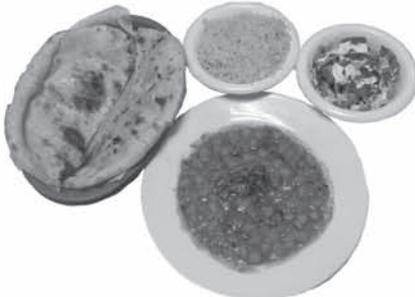
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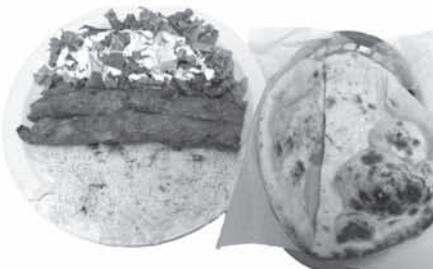
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TSA ABUSES AND FAILURES

RON PAUL

The press reports are horrifying: 95 year-old women humiliated; children molested; disabled people abused; men

and women subjected to unwarranted groping and touching of their most private areas; involuntary radiation exposure. If the perpetrators were a gang of criminals, their headquarters would be raided by SWAT teams and armed federal agents. Unfortunately, in this case the perpetrators are armed federal agents. This is the sorry situation ten years after the creation of the Transportation Security Administration.

The requirement that Americans be forced to undergo this appalling treatment simply for the "privilege" of traveling in their own country reveals much about how the federal government feels about our liberties. The unfortunate fact that we put up with this does not speak well for our willingness to stand up to an abusive government.

Many Americans continue to fool themselves into accepting TSA abuse by saying "I don't mind giving

up my freedoms for security." In fact, they are giving up their liberties and not receiving security in return. Last week, for example, just days after an elderly cancer victim was forced to submit to a cruel and pointless TSA search, including removal of an adult diaper, a Nigerian immigrant somehow managed to stroll through TSA security checks and board a flight

tion. He was detained and questioned, only to be released to do it again 5 days later! We should not be surprised to find government ineptitude and indifference at the TSA.

At the time the TSA was being created I strongly opposed federalization of airline security. As I wrote in an article back in 2001:

"Congress should be privatizing rather than nationalizing airport security. The free market can and does produce excellent security in many industries. Many security-intensive industries do an outstanding job of maintaining safety without depending on federal agencies. Nuclear power plants, chemical plants, oil refineries, and armored money transport companies all employ private security forces that operate very effectively. No government agency will ever care about the bottom-line security and profitability of the airlines more than the airlines themselves. Airlines cannot make money if travelers and flight crews are afraid to fly, and in a free market they would drastically change security measures to prevent future tragedies. In the current regulatory environment, however, the airlines prefer to relinquish all responsibility for secu-

rity to the government, so that they cannot be held accountable for lapses in the future."

What we need is real privatization of security, but not phony privatization with the same TSA screeners in private security firm uniforms still operating under the "guidance" of the federal government.

-- Ron Paul

from New York to LA--with a stolen, expired boarding pass and an out-of-date student ID as his sole identifica-



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What we need is real privatization of security, but not phony privatization with the same TSA screeners in private security firm uniforms still operating under the "guidance" of the federal government. Real security will be achieved when the airlines are once again in charge of protecting their property and their passengers.

In the meantime I am introducing the American Traveler Dignity Act, which establishes that airport security screeners are not immune from any US law regarding physical

contact with another person, making images of another person, or causing physical harm through the use of radiation-emitting machinery on another person. It means they are not above laws the rest of us must obey. As we continue to see more and more outrageous stories of TSA abuses and failures, I hope that my colleagues in the House will listen to their constituents and join with me to support this legislation.

Ron Paul is a Republican candidate for President.

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GREGGORY MOORE

It was a pretty typical beginning for Jenny Stockdale. Way back when, before she had shared her soulful songbird twang at the 2010 Summer And Music series (for both BuskerFest and the Church of Rock & Roll), Fingerprints, the Prospector, Bixby Knolls First Fridays, and the Green Is Greater festival—that’s all within the last twelve months—she took the stage at her high-school talent show with her dad’s banged-up Ovation and played “a really terrible three-chord song that I probably stole from somewhere.”

As a freshman at St. John Fisher College in New York she got her own guitar, then played her first-ever set of original material at the Fishbowl. “I’m going to be a female singer/songwriter!” she says now,

sarcastically giving voice to her 17-year-old inner child.

We’re sitting in Portfolio on a Wednesday night in June—an apt setting, since her California debut six years ago was right here, at an open mic just like the one starting up in the other room.

For years she made no effort to play live. “Even now, music is a part of my life, but it’s not the only thing that I want to do,” she says, “so it’s really hard to commit the kind of time to it that it requires to have it be a career. [...] It’s a full-time job. I came out here to finish up school and do other things.”

She was busy, for example, writing for *The District*, a gig she landed after being approached by staff writer Dave Wielenga at a city council meeting after speaking out against the Long Beach breakwater, an issue she was covering for CSU Long Beach’s Daily 49er. Impressed, Wielenga handed her a pen and asked her to write out her contact information on the back of one of his business cards. “I gave him the information, but I kept the pen, then I looked

him up online and sent him an e-mail, saying, ‘If you want to see your pen again, you’re going to have to let me write for you! I’ve got this great story about the breakwater.’”

Little did she know that serendipity was also to affect her musical life. As a Hot Java barista she met the (now-former) bass player of Greater California, which led to her playing with the band at about a half-dozen shows, including one at the Long Beach Museum of Art’s After Dark events.

Another job was at a portrait studio on Long Beach Blvd., through which she met the wife of Fingerprints’ owner Rand Foster, a connection that eventually led to Foster’s hearing a few songs Stockdale had recorded. Then Stockdale connected with Justin Hectus, Foster’s co-architect on the S.A.M series, through her work on the inaugural installment of University by the Sea. “It’s a really strange [Six Degrees of] Kevin Bacon situation,” Stockdale says of the nexus into which she’s stumbled. “I really don’t know how it worked out to be in my favor.”



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Hear her play, though, and it doesn't seem all that surprising. Her original songs—the few she's recorded, anyway (plans are in the works for a July recording session in New York)—speak Stockdale's having been weaned on the likes of Joni Mitchell's "Both Sides Now" and Neil Young's "Ohio," tunes which she covered with tuneful restraint and strength during her Church of Rock & Roll set, a tasteful restraint allowing her music to flow with a gentle strength.

Her stage presence only helps matters, coupling an earthy California beauty (never mind that she's a transplant) with a deportment lacking in affectation. Her stage-talk is not banter; it's the engaged self-deprecation you might expect from someone strumming your living room.

When she's singing, though, it's pure immersion. Stockdale calls her experience of music is "a reflex, an internal response." Her commitment to the moment makes her appear completely self-assured. But she's not. "I have come to find out that if I have a beer before I play, I can let go

and tell my hands to stop sweating," she says. "I've grown better at not fixating on [the performance]. [...] The minute I start thinking about what I'm doing—playing, singing, being in front of people, sharing thoughts I wouldn't normally share—I will mess up, because I'm pulling myself out of a very delicate balance."

Stockdale has no set schema on how her music comes. "It's not like a formula," she says. "It's kind of like a thunderstorm. If it's raining, you put the buckets out because you might never get water again."

That you can enjoy Stockdale's personal meteorology online is a recent development, which she shares with the same mockery that characterizes a good half of what she says about herself. "My friend Katie kind of made me <http://jennystockdale.bandcamp.com/album/the-demos>, since I suck at self-promotion. [...] Now I have five or six songs out there, to make me look semi-legitimate."

That Jenny Stockdale is a legitimate talent is a settled question. What remains to be seen is where that

talent takes her.

"I don't know how it's turning into what it's turning into," she says, for a moment managing to discuss herself without sardonicism, "but it's great, and I'll ride it as far as it will go."

At press time, Jenny Stockdale is scheduled to perform with Sam Outlaw at a July 24 SIPS show (Sundays in the Park with S.A.M.), and with a likely show July 15 in Costa Mesa (with multi-instrumentalist Mary McKeever). Look her up on Facebook to stay informed.

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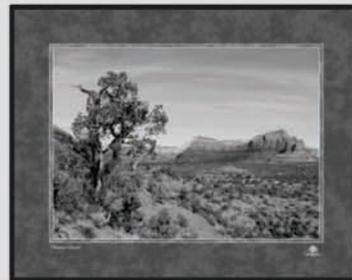


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