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Magazine

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Nightmares**

**Long Beach
Blues**

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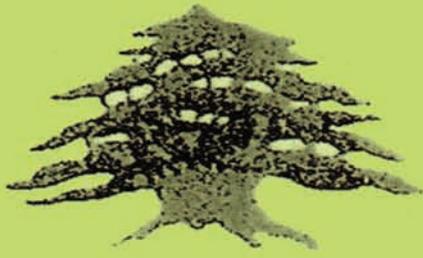
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photo by Slobodan Dimitrov

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“LONG BEACH BLUES PROJECT”

SLOBODAN DIMITROV



“Long Beach Blues Project”

photo copyright © 2012

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. sdimitrovphoto.com

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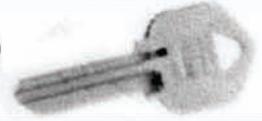
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NUCLEAR POWER'S DEMISE

HARVEY WASSERMAN

In the wake of Fukushima, grassroots citizen action is shutting the worldwide nuclear power industry. A Soltartopian tipping point is upon us in the US, Europe and Japan which will re-define how the human race gets its energy. States rights and local democracy are at the core of the battle.

The definitive breaking point looms in Vermont. By mid-March a state board is likely to deny the Yankee reactor licenses to operate or to create radioactive waste. If that happens, a Vermont shutdown could mark a critical moment in establishing state power over an atomic reactor. A critical domino would fall---as it has in Japan and Europe---and we will begin taking down old reactors all across the US. Four new reactors barely under construction will go down with them, making inevitable the end America's age of atomic power.

In Vermont, the New Orleans-based Entergy bought the Yankee reactor in 2002. Entergy agreed to shut it if the state's Public Service Board denied it a Certificate of Public Good to continue to operate and generate radioactive waste. That decision is due by March 21, the forty-year anniversary of the reactor's 1972 opening.

Entergy has horrified many of its staunchest Green Mountain supporters. One of its cooling towers has simply collapsed from ancient rot and basic negligence. It has leaked tritium and other radioactive isotopes from pipes the company has said---under oath---do not exist. Entergy sued Vermont after the legislature voted (26 to 4) to shut the reactor. When its lawyers won in federal court, Entergy demanded the public pay it \$4 million in legal fees.

But the company miscalculated. It welcomed federal Judge Garvin Murtha's ruling that the legislature could not shut Yankee (the state is appealing). But Murtha also upheld the right of the Public Service Board to deny Entergy those operating and waste production permits. So after lauding the decision, Entergy's lawyers now want Murtha to change it. Entergy has also asked the Public

Service Board for a stay in its expected denial of the permits.

The case is clearly headed to the corporate-owned US Supreme Court. But for Entergy to win, the Roberts majority would have to rule that the company was temporarily insane when it signed its agreements with the state, and that a state agency can be forced (against its will) to issue reactor-operating and waste-creating permits.

The history of US courts denying states the right to shut reactors dates back to the 1954 Atomic Energy Act. But deferral to the federal Nuclear Regulatory Commission's bent for keeping rush-bucket reactors on line is rapidly eroding. The Commission granted Vermont Yankee a license extension one day before the Fukushima disaster. A state-mandated shut down could seriously impact the political calculus for an industry whose grassroots opposition has become a full-on tsunami.

New York's Indian Point reactors are under assault

from Governor Andrew Cuomo, whose father cut the 1988 deal that forced Long Island's Shoreham reactor to shut without ever achieving commercial operation. Cuomo is being pushed by a fierce grassroots anti-nuke groundswell. Entergy does need state permits that would let two remaining reactors at Indian Point (Unit One went down long ago) continue heating and irradiating the Hudson River. New York could demand Entergy build extremely expensive cooling towers, which may force it to shut down for economic reasons. Similar forces are at work in New Jersey and other states.

In Florida, botched multi-billion-dollar repairs to the Crystal River reactor near Tampa

have forced a brutal grassroots battle over soaring electric rates which must be approved by increasingly beleaguered state regulators. It is highly likely that reactor will never operate again.

Pilgrim, Massachusetts is strongly intervening against a license extension for its reactor. Both remaining reactors are currently shut at California's San Onofre (Unit One there also went down long ago), where grassroots activists---including local surfers---are in pitched battle against re-opening. Ohio's Davis-Besse is having its containment dome sliced for the fourth time. Two reactors in Nebraska are still recovering from major flooding.

**The accelerating
revolution in
renewables has
allowed solar, wind and
other green sources
to outstrip atomic
reactors in cost, time to
build, ecological impact
and safety.**

-- Harvey Wasserman

All across the country, dozens of rust-bucket nukes stagger on their last legs even as the Nuclear Regulatory Commission hands them extended licenses in the face of escalating state and local opposition. Once the fire-wall against recourse from the states is breached, a flood of shutdowns could well follow.

In Japan, utilities must have permits from a host prefecture to re-open after refueling or repairs. Of 54 licensed reactors nationwide, only two now operate. Both could be shut soon, rendering Japan nuke-free for the first time in four decades.

Germany has shut 8 reactors and will take down 11 more by 2012. Except for Great Britain and a number of eastern holdouts, the “nuclear renaissance” has been all but abandoned in Europe, with an escalating cascade of elderly nukes going cold and proposed new projects being abandoned.

The accelerating revolution in renewables has allowed solar, wind and other green sources to outstrip atomic reactors in cost, time to build, ecological impact and safety. As billions pour into Solartopian sources, private investment in atomic energy has all but disappeared--except where there are massive taxpayer subsidies.

Even that's not enough. In 2011, President Obama handed \$8.33 billion in federal loan guarantees to the builders of two reactors at Georgia's Vogtle. But Peach State ratepayers are already being soaked for billions more in pre-payments, and the cost of the project is soaring. A parallel financial disaster looms at the Robinson site in neighboring South Carolina. Though the industry assumes

these four reactors will eventually be finished, economic realities may say otherwise.

Cost estimates for new nukes have been soaring even before construction begins. Even with federal money, the builders still demand that state ratepayers foot the bill as the process proceeds, meaning consumers are on the hook for multiple billions even if the reactors never open. Pitched battles over this Construction Work in Progress scam have already been won by consumers in Missouri and are being fought in Iowa and elsewhere. As the years of building drag on, costs will escalate while renewables continue to become cheaper. Sooner or later, construction is likely to stop, as it did at numerous projects in the 1970s and 1980s which were never finished.

Today the Department of Energy still sits on some \$10 billion in available guarantees without a recipient ready to build a new nuke. For the first time since early in the George W. Bush years, there has been no executive request for additional reactor construction loan guarantees.

In Finland and Flamanville, France, new reactor projects are years behind schedule and billions over budget.

With new construction virtually abandoned, and the continued operation of old reactors under intense attack in Japan, Europe and the US, only China and India remain as likely sites for large numbers of new nukes. Russia is doing its best to peddle them throughout the Third World. South Korea wants to sell reactors to the United Arab Emirates.

But grassroots resistance in India has been fierce.

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China is still mulling a post-Fukushima decision on whether to proceed with reactors already under construction. Signs of a popular uprising against rampant pollution---including nuclear reactors---indicate growing public opposition.

But here in the US, we are at the fall-off-the-cliff moment for atomic energy, new and old. Entergy, says Deb Katz of the Citizens Awareness Network, has been “blinded by its arrogance and contempt for the state of Vermont.” The company, she says, “is attempting to establish that corporations are more powerful than the states they operate in.”

If the citizens of Vermont can shut Yankee, a dam will be breached and the post Fukushima power of a rising grassroots tsunami will be made tangible. Solartopia will be that much closer. And the grassroots No Nukes campaign will begin to take its place as one of history’s most successful popular movements.

Let’s just make sure these shut-downs happen before the next Fukushima irradiates us all.

NukeFree.org was founded in 2007 by Bonnie Raitt, Jackson Browne, Graham Nash and friends to stop a proposed \$50 billion loan guarantee package meant to finance new nuclear reactor construction. Joining a successful national grassroots campaign, they established this website. Editor Harvey Wasserman has worked with Bonnie, Jackson, and Graham since the late 1970s and the legendary Musicians United for Safe Energy (MUSE) concerts in Madison Square Garden.

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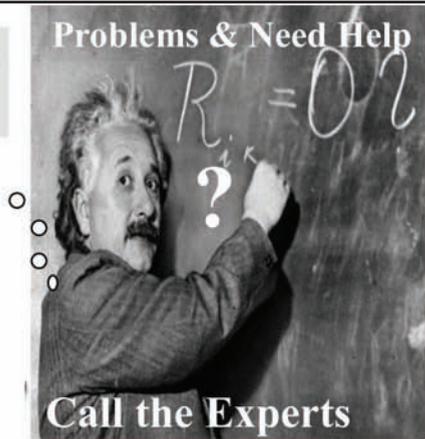
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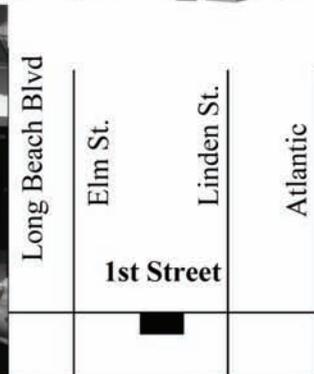
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DRILLING WON'T LOWER GAS PRICES

JOCELYN FONG

In a pretty impressive act of journalism, the Associated Press recently conducted a “statistical analysis of 36 years of monthly, inflation-adjusted gasoline prices and U.S. domestic oil production.” The result: “No statistical correlation between how much oil comes out of U.S. wells and the price at the pump.” It’s neat to see math cut through the talking points and get straight to the truth of the matter -- which is that expanding drilling is a fundamentally ineffectual response to gas price spikes.

Given that changes in U.S. oil production don’t move gasoline prices, it should be clear that U.S. government policies related to drilling are of even smaller consequence. Indeed, 92 percent of economists surveyed by the Chicago Booth School of Business agreed this week that “changes in U.S. gasoline prices over the past 10 years have predominantly been due to market factors rather than U.S. federal economic or energy policies.”

Still not convinced? How about another 20 economists and analysts from across the political spectrum who will tell you the same thing:

Ken Green, American Enterprise Institute, “If the U.S. produced more of its own oil, it would probably reduce imports, but it’s not likely that it would reduce prices ... We probably cannot produce so much oil to exert downward pressure on prices compared to the world market.”

Peter Van Doren and Jerry Taylor, Cato Institute: “Sure, more domestic oil creates the possibility of fewer refined imports tied to the price of Brent crude, but given that the price of Brent sets the price for crude generally, the result would be more profit for domestic crude producers rather than significantly lower gasoline prices for Americans (not that there’s anything wrong with that).”

Doug Holtz-Eakin, American Action Forum: “Domestic action to increase production will not lower gas prices set on a global market.”

Christopher Knittel, MIT economist: “There are

not many markets where the United States can’t impose its will on market outcomes ... This is one we can’t, and it’s hard for the average American to understand that and it’s easy for politicians to feed off that.”

Pinelopi Goldberg, Yale economist: “US domestic policy has only a tiny effect on the world price of oil. US foreign policy is probably more relevant than energy policy.”

Steve Koonin, Institute for Defense Analyses: “When you hear the international oil companies advocating for energy independence, it’s really about making money, which isn’t a bad thing ... If they produce a million more barrels a day, they’re not going to change the global price much. And since they know the global price is going up, they’ll just make more money. There’s nothing wrong with that, but it doesn’t solve the price problem or the greenhouse gas problem.”

Michael Levi, Council on Foreign Relations: “The amount of oil you produce at home doesn’t affect the price ... You can lower your vulnerability to price by lowering your consumption of oil, but not by increasing your production.”

Severin Borenstein, UC Berkeley economist: “Producing more oil domestically will enrich the U.S. economy, particularly U.S. oil companies and their workers. With oil so valuable, it may be a good idea, though the value must be weighed against environmental consequences. But it will have no discernible impact on gas prices, because it will change the world’s supply/demand balance for oil by less than 2 or 3 percent over a decade or more.”

David Peterson, Duke statistician: “U.S. production and demand have little to do

with the price of gasoline in the U.S.”

Edward Melnick, NYU statistician: When U.S. production goes up, the price of gas “is certainly not going down ... The data does not suggest that whatsoever.”

David Sandalow, former Brookings fellow: “Drilling offshore to lower oil prices is like walking an extra 20 feet per day to lose weight. ... It’s just not going to make much of a difference.”

Tom Kloza, Oil Price Information Service: “This drill drill drill thing is tired ... It’s a simplistic way of looking for a solution that doesn’t exist.”

Richard Newell, former Administrator of Energy Information Administration: “We do not project additional volumes of oil that could flow from greater access to oil

There’s simply no excuse for political reporters to tolerate, let alone advance claims that more U.S. oil production will meaningfully address our gas price woes.

-- Jocelyn Fong

resources on Federal lands to have a large impact on prices given the globally integrated nature of the world oil market.”

Dean Baker, Center for Economic and Policy Research: “There is almost no disagreement among economists that drilling everywhere all the time offshore will have almost no impact on the price of gas in the United States. The reason is that we have a world market for oil. The additional oil that might come from offshore drilling is a drop in the bucket in a world oil market of almost 90 million barrels a day.”

Lou Crandall, Wrightson ICAP LLC: “Higher oil prices today are a global phenomenon, and the additional supply from increased drilling by the U.S. would not alter the global balance of supply and demand greatly. Gasoline prices at the pump would be higher either way. The only difference is that a somewhat larger share of the revenue would accrue to domestic interests (governmental and private) rather than to foreign suppliers.”

Paul Bledsoe, Bipartisan Policy Center: “The notion that somehow we can produce so much domestically that we will move the global price is incorrect.”

Tom O’Donnell, The New School: “The amount of extra oil that the U.S. would produce, as far as affecting the world price of oil, is almost insignificant.”

Deborah Gordon, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace: “We can drill doggedly in our own backyards, but the price of gasoline will remain more a matter of speculation over externally-driven factors than tapping new sources of oil at home.”

Joseph Dukert, energy analyst: “Americans tend to exaggerate the price effects of fluctuations in domestic production in relation to the total amount of oil in global trade. On the larger stage, the perception of geopolitical risks is more important.”

Phyllis Martin, Energy Information Administration: “In 2009, the U.S. produced about 7 percent of what was produced in the entire world, so increasing the oil production in the U.S. is not going to make much of a difference in world markets and world prices ... It just gets lost. It’s not that much.”

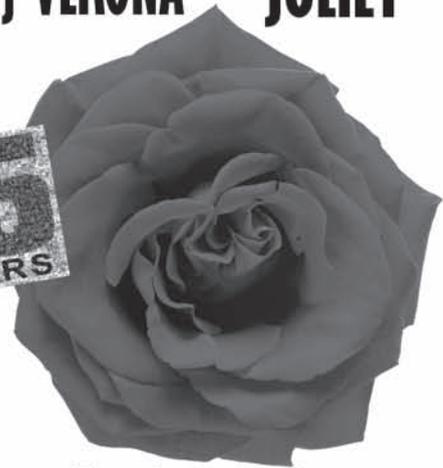
Even Fox’s John Stossel acknowledged recently that U.S. energy policy “doesn’t make that much of a difference” on gas prices, contrary to what others at Fox News are claiming.

There’s simply no excuse for political reporters to tolerate, let alone advance claims that more U.S. oil production will meaningfully address our gas price woes. (Here’s a taste, from the past week alone, of the type of he-said/she-said reporting that is just not cutting it: *CNN*, *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Wall Street Journal*, *USA Today*.) This is crucially important because once we understand that the U.S. is incapable of holding down the price of gasoline, we can start looking seriously at the options we *do* have to make ourselves less vulnerable to these inevitable price spikes.

Jocelyn Fong is a columnist at MediaMatters.org.

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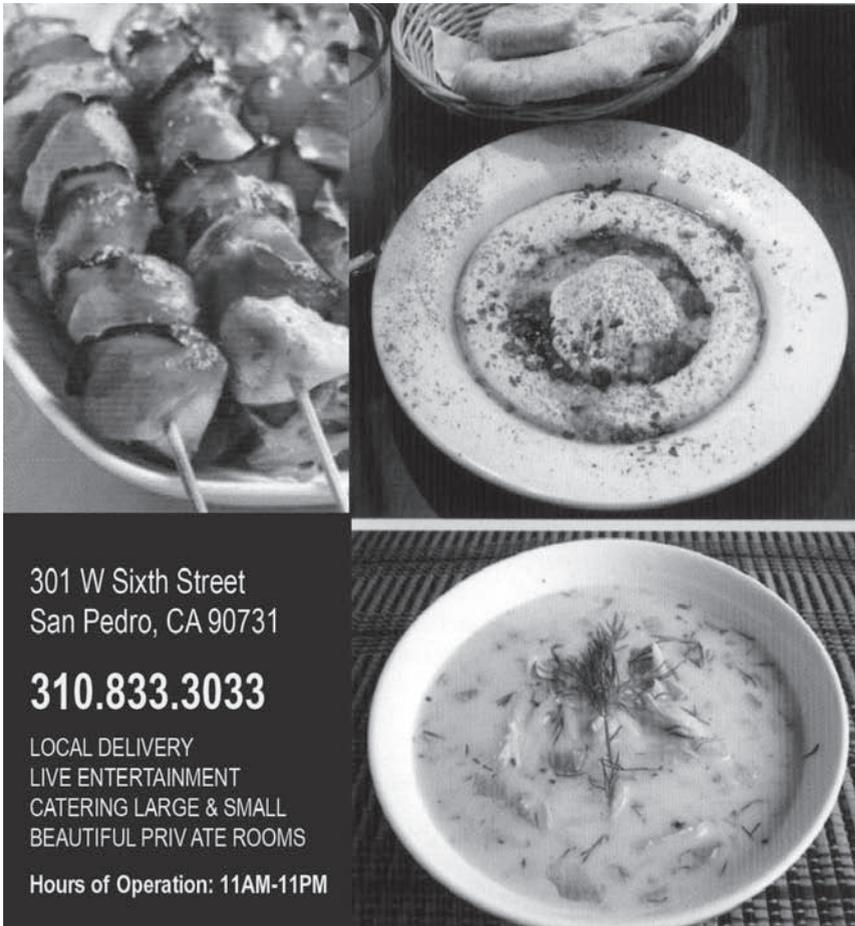
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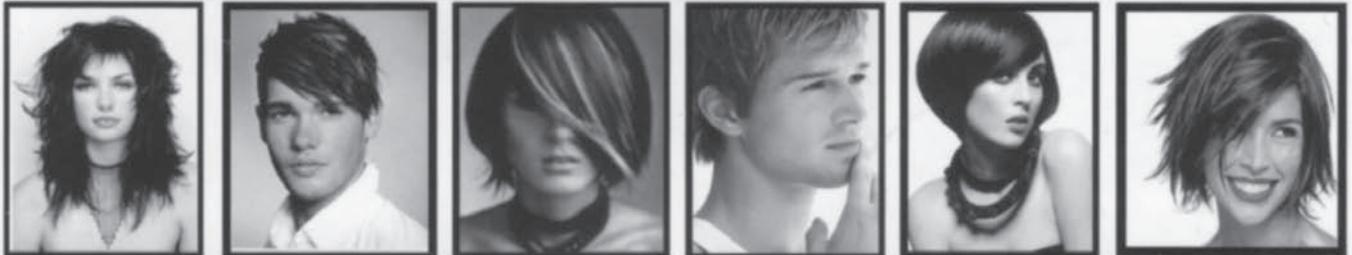
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Let us consider the fundamental guiding principles for the United States of America -- freedom, equal opportunity, compassion, and security.

Then let us consider how those principles have been severely undermined, and how we, the American people, can restore them so that once again our government is of, by, and for the people, rather than a tool of oppression cynically utilized for the benefit of a small, powerful, abusive, elite political and financial class, to the detriment of the vast majority of U.S. citizens, as well as billions of people around the world.

We often hear it said that the United States is the greatest nation in the world. What exactly is meant by that? And is it true? The more important question is: Can we, the American people, make this, once again, a great and proud nation -- a nation that lives up to its original promise?

Who are we as a people, what do we really believe in, and just what does our nation stand for? How far have we drifted away -- or, rather, bolted away -- from what we once were? And how do we, once again, attain greater freedom, more equal opportunity, compassion, and security for all?

These questions have never been more vital to consider and confront. Our nation has been transformed in just a few short years -- virtually unrecognizable in fundamental respects when compared to the republic that once proudly proclaimed a constitutional system of checks and balances, the rule of law, and constitutional protections of due process, restraints on war-making, and a truly balanced system of separation of powers among three co-equal branches of government.

We are at a nation-changing -- even world-changing -- fork in the road. We can continue on the path of becoming more totalitarian, with an imperial presidency

that continues to accrue to itself unprecedented tyrannical powers; more greedy as a nation and as a people; less capable to compete on a global stage; more imperial and war-like; less equal under the law; more divided, in terms of income and wealth, between a tiny elite financial aristocracy and the rest of our citizenry; more cruel toward men, women, and children, here and abroad, who are not part of the political and financial elite; and less secure, as a nation and as individuals, now and in the future.

Or we can turn things around and become more free and respectful of the fundamental rights and interests of people in the U.S. and elsewhere, with restraints on executive power -- and accountability for abuses of that power -- as contemplated by the founders and our Consti-

tution; more generous and helpful as a nation and as a people; more capable of competing with other nations, their students, and their workers; more committed to liberty and justice for all; more prosperous, with a strong, healthy middle class, capable of living rewarding lives through equal opportunity; more compassionate toward our own citizens, immigrants, and men, women, and children in other nations; and more secure in our homes, our communities, and our nation, presently and in the future.

The second sentence of the Declaration of Independence sets forth the general guiding principles of the founding of our great nation: We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. There could be no stronger affirmation of our nation's

guiding principles of freedom, equal opportunity, compassion, and personal, familial, community, and national security.

These guiding principles ring loudly in the first sentence of our Constitution: We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do or-

If the Bush tax cuts had been allowed to expire in 2010, as promised, for people with incomes over \$200,000, federal revenues would increase approximately \$140 billion during this year. That would be sufficient to cover basic health care needs for those without coverage in the United States.

-- Ross C. "Rocky" Anderson

tain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

The guiding principles, then, set forth in the Declaration of Independence and our Constitution are that people -- all people, not just citizens of the United States -- are created as equals, they all have unalienable rights, including the right to life, the right to liberty and the right to pursue happiness, that we seek to establish justice, ensure domestic tranquility (that is, peace), provide for the defense of our nation (that is, security), promote the welfare of everyone, and secure liberty not only for us, but for later generations -- "our posterity."

It is for each generation to exercise conscientious diligence in sustaining those guiding principles. Sadly -- tragically -- those who were to have represented our interests in Washington, particularly during these past ten years, have severely undermined those principles. And we, the people, have not sufficiently spoken out and acted to return our nation to the principled course set by the Founders...

President Bush was an innovator. For the first time in our nation's history, we fought a war, then two wars -- and, at the same time, instead of raising revenues for the wars, he and the complicit Congress gave enormous tax breaks to the very wealthy. It was as if we took out credit cards in the names of our children and charged the costs of the wars to them, while enriching the very rich even more. It was a continuation of a reckless pattern of pandering by so-called conservatives -- aided and abetted by Democrats. Between 1979 and 2006, the top incremental tax rate

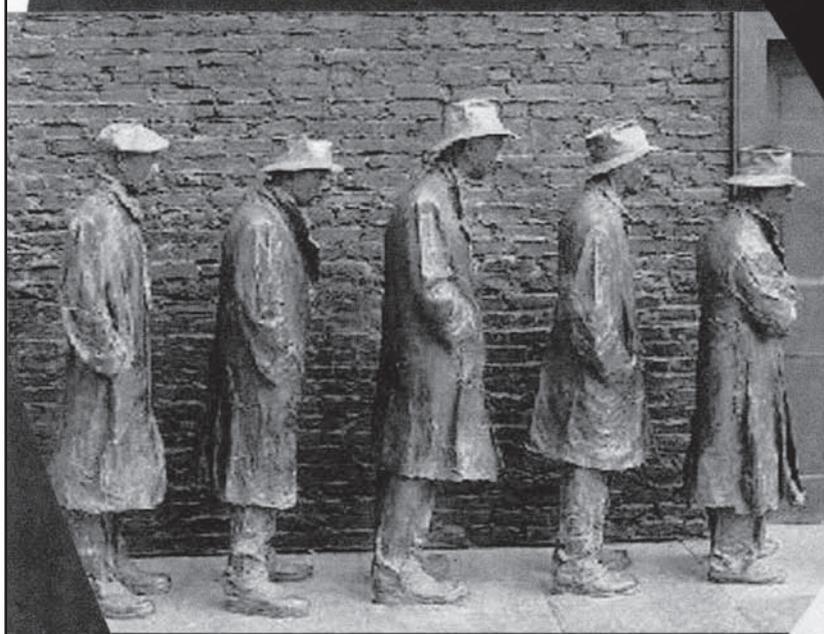
on earned income was cut in half; capital gains taxes were cut by almost as much; and corporate taxes were reduced by more than 25%. Of course, not many corporations pay according to even that rate because of all the loopholes and deductions their lobbyists have pushed through Congress over the years.

If the Bush tax cuts had been allowed to expire in 2010, as promised, for people with incomes over \$200,000, federal revenues would increase approximately \$140 billion during this year. That would be sufficient to cover basic health care needs for those without coverage in the United States. What would the impact be on those making more than \$200,000 a year? It would reduce their aftertax incomes, on average, by about 4.5%.

When offered the choice between health care for all or an elimination of the Bush tax cuts for the wealthy, Congress and the President have chosen less taxes for the wealthy.

The corrupting influence of money in our political system -- the massive campaign contributions that essentially put Congress and the White House on retainer to the wealthy -- has contributed significantly to what I call the Great Chasm. One of many examples is what Washington politicians -- those who are supposed to be representing all of us -- did for hedge fund managers. Our tax laws now allow hedge fund managers, some of whom make more than a billion dollars a year, to have most of their earnings taxed at the capital gains rate, 15%, while middle class working men and women pay a significantly higher rate. According to Paul Krugman in *The Conscience of a*

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Liberal, that loophole alone costs the federal government more than \$6 billion in lost revenue, enough to provide health care to three million children. And almost \$2 billion of that tax boondoggle goes to 25 people!

Over the past decade, the incomes of the middle class have fallen, while those in the top 1% have enjoyed, on average, an increase of 18%. And what incredible incomes they are! The top 1% in the United States are paid about 25% of the total income -- and they control a whopping 40% of the total wealth. The disparity in income and wealth between the small privileged class and the rest of us is as great now as it was in the 1920s, on the eve of the Great Depression.

This is not something that just naturally happens because of market forces. It happens because of politicians serving the political and financial elite to the immense detriment of the public interest.

How did we build a strong, healthy middle class and a prosperous economy following the Great Depression -- and what is taking us back now to the gross inequality and tremendous insecurity for most people reminiscent of the Gilded Age?

As Paul Krugman shows, there was a vast political polarization and an enormous income and wealth disparity in the 1920s-- very much like today. However, political reform -- public policy geared toward making life better for the vast majority of Americans -- made all the difference. There was a considerable narrowing of the gap between the wealthy and the rest of the nation -- what Krugman calls "The Great Compression." It was entirely the opposite from today's Great Chasm.

Incomes for the very wealthy actually decreased from the 1920s to the 1950s, while the incomes for middle class families nearly doubled. The middle class also had greater security, with employers offering new benefits like health insurance and retirement plans. The federal government also provided unemployment insurance and Social Security for retirees.

It all equated to a major economic democratization of American society, with much narrower differences between the pay for executives and line workers, and much narrower differences between employees with formal education and manual laborers. Just the opposite of what we're experiencing today.

Much of the Gilded Age consciousness was gone by the 1950s. And now it has returned. Many of the wealthy turn their backs on the quality of public education as they enroll their children in private schools. Many of the wealthy live only among themselves, providing for their own security, as they isolate themselves in gated communities. Only the best in medical care for the wealthy, while 50 million people go without basic health care coverage -- and, even if the Obama plan is fully implemented, 23 million men, women, and children will be without essential medical coverage, unlike any other nation in the developed world. And 700,000 bankruptcies each year are attributable to enormous medical bills -- again, a tragedy unknown throughout the rest of the industrialized world.

Much of the change came about because of taxes. In the 1920s, the top income tax rate was only 24%. The top income tax rate rose to 63 % during the first Roosevelt administration, and 79 % in the second. By the mid-1950s, the top tax rate had risen to 91% -- and that was under the Republican administration of Dwight Eisenhower. Today's top tax bracket -- applicable only to income in excess of \$388,000 -- is only 35%, yet listen to the wealthy and their lapdogs in Congress howl when anyone has the temerity to suggest that perhaps they should pay their fair share to help reduce the accumulated debt and tremendous interest burden we will hand off to our children and later generations -- and to lend a hand to those living in poverty, including 22% of our nation's children.

The average corporate tax rate increased from less than 14% in 1929 to more than 45% in 1955 and 48% in 1979. Today's corporate tax rate is 35%, but the average corporation pays no more than 15%, and many corporations, like General Electric, taking advantage of massive loopholes and deductions corporate lobbyists have pushed through Congress, pay nothing at all.

The same thing happened with estate taxes -- what the Republicans, with the aid of the spin-meister Frank Luntz, would have us call "death taxes." Estate taxes went from 20% in the 1920s to 45%, then 60%, then 70%, and up to 77%. Today, the estate tax, applicable only to estates in excess of \$5.12 million, is 35%. Yet listen to some of the wealthy whine -- as if their descendants are somehow entitled to more than \$5 million without any taxation, while

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22% of the children in the United States live in poverty.

If, following the 1920s, taxes accounted for the decrease in wealth for the very rich, what accounts mostly for the increase in wealth and income for most of the rest? In large part, it was the union movement. By the end of World War II, more than a third of nonfarm workers were union members. Strong union advocacy means higher wages, better benefits, and a rippling effect that raises wages for others. It also brings into focus the disparity between the pay of top executives and average workers.

Also, during the war, the Roosevelt administration set wages and, given the values of that administration, it tended to set the wages in such a way that the lower paid workers received more increases than others.

The increase in taxes for the wealthy, a strong union movement, and wage controls that shrunk the gap between the wealthy and the middle class led to a much more equal distribution of the total income for thirty years -- as well as unprecedented prosperity. Just the opposite of what we're experiencing today.

The gross inequalities today are alarming -- and tragic. As of 2007, the top 10% owned 84% of the financial wealth (defined as net worth minus the value of one's home). The bottom 80% owned just 7% of all financial wealth.

According to William Domhoff in *Who Rules America?*, between 1983 and 2004, in large part because of tax cuts for the wealthy and the defeat of labor unions, of all the new financial wealth created in the U.S., 43% of

it went to the top 1%. Ninety-four percent of it went to the top 20% -- meaning that the bottom 80% received only 6% of all new financial wealth generated in the United States during the strong economic years of the 1980s, 1990s, and early 2000s. In short, as working people produced more because of greater efficiencies, they shared in almost none of the gains -- while investors and top executives took almost all of it.

One factor contributing to this gaping disparity is yet another outrage: the average executive pay as compared with the average factory worker pay. CEO pay at 102 major companies was nearly 40 times that of average full-time workers. By the early 2000s, according to Krugman, CEO pay averaged 367 times the pay of the average worker. And in 2007, according to Domhoff, the ratio between CEOs and factory workers was 344:1, while in Europe it was about 25:1.

What can we, the American people, do? First, recognize that the Democratic and Republican Parties are a democracy-destroying political duopoly, which has joined forces in shafting the vast majority of Americans, who are struggling every day to just get by, while serving politicians' campaign contributors, including Wall Street bankers, for-profit insurance companies, the pharmaceutical industry, hedge fund managers, for-profit colleges (many of which are owned by investment banks), and anti-union forces. These Democrats and Republicans deregulated the financial industry and looked the other way while financial institutions and their officers engaged in wholesale fraud

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-- all of which led to the economic melt-down from which we are still reeling, while the perpetrators are still lining their pockets with multi-million dollar bonuses, derived from government bail-outs.

They are the same duopoly that has caved to the fossil fuel industry in failing to provide essential international leadership to prevent the most catastrophic consequences of climate change. They have become so craven that President Obama even vetoed the EPA's effort to reduce the emission of ground level ozone and has now paved the way for the southern leg of the Keystone XL Pipeline and vastly expanded offshore oil drilling.

They are the same duopoly that thinks so little of our democracy that they have made it almost impossible for any new party or independent candidate to get on several states' ballots -- and, through their total control of the Presidential Debate Commission, which hijacked the presidential debates from the League of Women Voters, have prevented any non-plutocratic voices from being heard by the electorate during presidential debates.

In short, each of us can say: We're not going to take it any more. We have drawn our line -- and won't budge from it.

We won't support anyone who disregards our Constitution and the rule of law.

We won't support anyone who will not work to stop the insane and inhumane incarceration of 2.3 million people, many of them for non-violent offenses -- an incarceration rate far greater than any other nation on earth and which is applied with a vengeance toward African-Americans and Latinos.

We won't support anyone who fails and refuses to face up to the need for rational, compassionate immigration reform.

We won't support anyone who will not commit to provide our students with an equal opportunity to obtain a higher education and equip themselves to be competitive globally with students and employees in other nations.

We won't support anyone who takes, or purports to authorize a president to take, our nation to war without a finding by Congress that war is justified -- and without compliance with the U.N. Charter, to which the U.S. is a signatory.

We won't support anyone who allows the continuation of Bush's budget-busting tax breaks for the wealthy.

We won't support anyone who makes it more difficult for working men and women to organize.

We won't support anyone who continues to allow multi-national corporations to profit by depriving U.S. workers of their jobs while exporting millions of jobs to other nations.

We won't support anyone who refuses to implement programs like the Works Progress Administration to hire millions of people to build up our nation's rapidly deteriorating infrastructure.

We won't support anyone who refuses to strengthen, rather than undermine, the safety nets provided by Social Security, Medicaid, and Medicare.

We won't support anyone who fails to provide

crucial leadership on climate change and a thriving clean energy economy.

We won't support anyone who refuses to commit to do everything possible to rid our government and electoral system of the corrupting influence of money.

And we won't support anyone who refuses to join the rest of the industrialized world in providing a health care system that costs much less, produces far better medical outcomes, and is available to everyone.

For those who are cynical, for those who are resigned to not being able to overcome the corruption and perversity of the influence of money in our plutocracy -- that is, government of, by, and for the wealthy -- I urge you to find inspiration in our own nation's long history of progressive social movements, as well as from recent examples in the Arab world.

Major movements, such as the anti-slavery movement, the women's suffrage movement, the labor movement, and the civil rights movement, all succeeded because of the tenacious, passionate commitment and activism by people, organized at the grass roots level. And there was a lot of money aligned against many of them -- yet they prevailed.

Consider also that people in the Arab world -- for instance, in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya -- recently organized, utilizing the democratized means of communication offered by social media, and succeeded in overthrow-

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ing long-time oppressive dictators. So, too, can the people of the United States, organize together, take a principled, courageous stand, and overthrow the corrupting influence of money in our government, including our electoral system, and achieve the restoration of the rule of law, a recommitment to fundamental constitutional principles, the reestablishment of the system of checks and balances essential to our republic, and a recommitment to the core values that will make this country great again: freedom, equal opportunity, compassion, and security.

Ben Franklin was approached by a woman as he was leaving the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia. She asked him, "Doctor, what do we have -- a monarchy or a republic?" Franklin responded, "A republic, ma'am, if you can keep it."

It's up to us. If we don't take action, and insist on a return to the practices and policies that reaffirm our most fundamental values, our republic and all it stands for could be lost forever. However, if we do, we can restore our republic and breathe life once again into our Constitution and recommit to all that can make this nation once again what the Founders, and those who have given their lives for our freedoms and values, intended and expected.

Rocky Anderson is running for President in the Justice Party. His website is www.voterocky.org. The above is excerpted from a recent speech.



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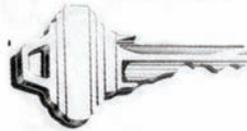


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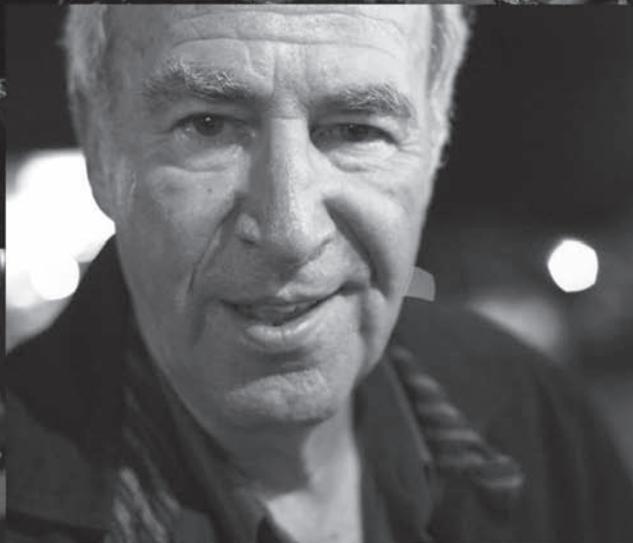
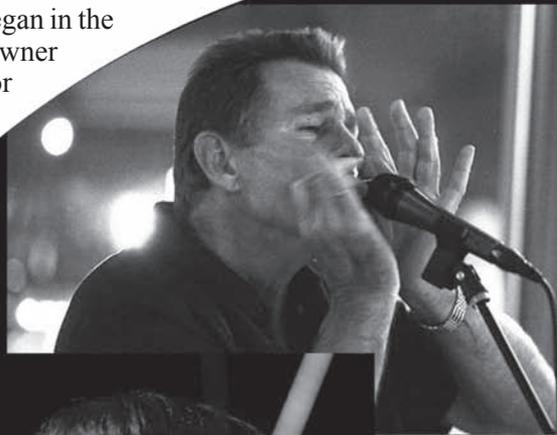
B. NOEL BARR

The Long Beach blues story began in the 60's when at least one club owner opened his country venue for blues music. You could

hear the blues played at inner city clubs, some very nice, some leaning more toward the juke joint. Blues was being played, but it was not in the mainstream. The blues was exclusively a black music idiom, the pure form from the delta and the more electric Chicago style had a brief run but faded toward more sellable pop versions during different times of the 20th century.

In the 1980's, master blues guitarist Bernie Pearl, who was part of the blues scene in Los Angeles, came to Long Beach bringing with him his show "Nothing but the Blues" (originally on KPPC now on KJZZ) which continues to this day with Gary "Wag Man" Wagner. Bernie brought to Long Beach "The Goodtime Blues Festival."

Candy Kane, White Boy James, Rod Piazza and James Harmon all made Long Beach home base as well as Mark St John who played with Al-





bert “The Ice Man” Collins and later with Joe Houston, Jill Sharpe and Mike Malone. Both came out of Houston’s band and are all part of the fabric of the Long Beach Blues Scene. This is just the beginning of this story about the blues and Long Beach.

B. Noel Barr, is part of the Long Beach Blues Project and writes as the Music Writer Dude for *Random Lengths News*. Barr is heard monthly on the Prime Spot Radio Show, on Kbeach.org currently 11-12:00PM last Wednesday of every month.

Photos by Slobodan Dimitrov.

Opposite page, clockwise from upper right: Tommy Johnson, Bernie Pearl, LA Jones, Johnna, Candye Kane, Bond Nichols.

This page, clockwise from upper left: Billy YY, Sherry Pruitt, Mark St. John, Mary Rose Goodwin, storyteller’s puppet, Cedric Burnside.

PUBLIC EDUCATION: "FAILURE BY DESIGN"

NOAM CHOMSKY

Public education is under attack around the world, and in response, student protests have recently been held in Britain, Canada, Chile, Taiwan and elsewhere.

California is also a battleground. *The Los Angeles Times* reports on another chapter in the campaign to destroy what had been the greatest public higher education system in the world: "California State University officials announced plans to freeze enrollment next spring at most campuses and to wait-list all applicants the following fall pending the outcome of a proposed tax initiative on the November ballot."

Similar defunding is under way nationwide. "In most states," *The New York Times* reports, "it is now tuition payments, not state appropriations, that cover most of the budget," so that "the era of affordable four-year public universities, heavily subsidized by the state, may be over."

Community colleges increasingly face similar prospects – and the shortfalls extend to grades K-12.

"There has been a shift from the belief that we as a nation benefit from higher education, to a belief that it's the people receiving the education who primarily benefit and so they should foot the bill," concludes Ronald G. Ehrenberg, a trustee of the State University system of New York and director of the Cornell Higher Education Research Institute.

A more accurate description, I think, is "Failure by

Design," the title of a recent study by the Economic Policy Institute, which has long been a major source of reliable information and analysis on the state of the economy.

The EPI study reviews the consequences of the transformation of the economy a generation ago from domestic production to financialization and offshoring. By design; there have always been alternatives.

One primary justification for the design is what Nobel Laureate Joseph Stiglitz called the "religion" that "markets lead to efficient outcomes," which was recently dealt yet another crushing blow by the collapse of the housing bubble that was ignored on doctrinal grounds, triggering the current financial crisis.

Claims are also made about the alleged benefits of the radical expansion of financial institutions since the 1970s. A more convincing description was provided by Martin Wolf, senior economic correspondent for *The*

Financial Times: "An out-of-control financial sector is eating out the modern market economy from inside, just as the larva of the spider wasp eats out the host in which it has been laid."

The EPI study observes that the "Failure by Design" is class-based. For the designers, it has been a stunning success, as revealed by the astonishing concentration of wealth in the top 1 percent, in fact the top 0.1 percent, while the majority has been reduced to virtual stagnation or decline.

In short, when they have the opportunity, "the Masters of Mankind" pursue their "vile maxim:" "... all for ourselves and nothing for other people," as Adam Smith explained long ago.

Mass public education is one of the great achievements of American society. It has had many dimensions. One purpose, for example, was to prepare independent farmers for life as wage laborers who would tolerate what they regarded as virtual slavery.

The coercive element did not pass without notice. Ralph Waldo Emerson observed that political leaders call for popular education because they fear that "This country is filling up with thousands and millions of voters, and you must educate them to keep them from our throats." But educated the

Mass public education is one of the great achievements of American society. It has had many dimensions. One purpose, for example, was to prepare independent farmers for life as wage laborers who would tolerate what they regarded as virtual slavery.

-- Noam Chomsky

right way: Limit their perspectives and understanding, discourage free and independent thought, and train them for obedience.

The “vile maxim” and its implementation have regularly called forth resistance, which in turn evokes the same fears among the elite. Forty years ago there was deep concern that the population was breaking free of apathy and obedience.

At the liberal internationalist extreme, the Trilateral Commission – the nongovernmental policy group from which the Carter Administration was largely drawn – issued stern warnings in 1975 that there is too much democracy, in part due to the failures of the institutions responsible for “the indoctrination of the young.” On the right, an important 1971 memorandum by Lewis Powell, directed to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the main business lobby, wailed that radicals were taking over everything – universities, media, government, etc. – and called on the business community to use its economic power to reverse the attack on our prized way of life – which he knew well. As a lobbyist for the tobacco industry, he was quite familiar with the workings of the nanny state for the rich that he called “the free market.”

Since then, many measures have been taken to restore discipline. One is the crusade for privatization – placing control in reliable hands.

Another is sharp increases in tuition, up nearly 600 percent since 1980. These produce a higher education system with “far more economic stratification than is true of any other country,” according to Jane Wellman, former director of the Delta Cost Project, which monitors these issues. Tuition increases trap students into long-term debt and hence subordination to private power.

Justifications are offered on economic grounds, but are singularly unconvincing. In countries rich to poor, including Mexico next-door, tuition remains free or nominal. That was true as well in the United States itself when it was a much poorer country after World War II and huge numbers of students were able to enter college under the GI bill – a factor in uniquely high economic growth, even putting aside the significance in improving lives.

Another device is the corporatization of the universities. That has led to a dramatic increase in layers of administration, often professional instead of drawn from the faculty as before; and to imposition of a business culture of “efficiency” – an ideological notion, not just an economic one.

One illustration is the decision of state colleges to eliminate programs in nursing, engineering and computer science, because they are costly – and happen to be the professions where there is a labor shortage, as *The New York Times* reports. The decision harms the society but conforms to the business ideology of short-term gain without regard for human consequences, in accord with the “vile maxim.”

Some of the most insidious effects are on teaching and monitoring. The Enlightenment ideal of education was captured in the image of education as laying down a string that students follow in their own ways, developing

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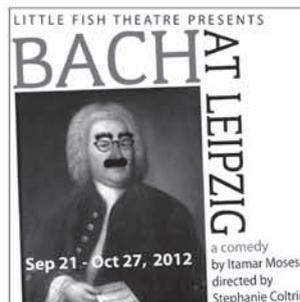
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their creativity and independence of mind.

The alternative, to be rejected, is the image of pouring water into a vessel – and a very leaky one, as all of us know from experience. The latter approach includes teaching to test and other mechanisms that destroy students’ interest and seek to fit them into a mold, easily controlled. All too familiar today.

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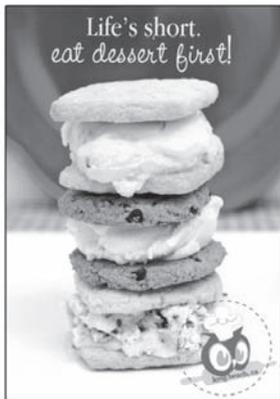
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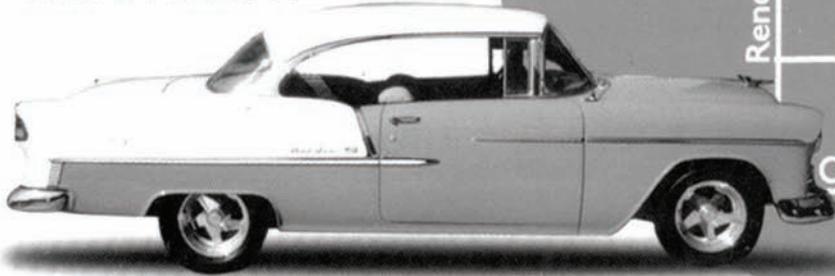
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PENANCE

JOHN O'KANE

The confessional is the perfect refuge from the lights. I wait and listen. How long has it been? A few minutes, an hour? I wish it had a lock. A sanctuary within a sanctuary.

It's comforting to be here without waiting for the priest to begin exhuming my soul, an always anxious stretch that made me feel like I was in a timeless vacuum. I'd often get dizzy and want to make a quick exit, but couldn't move.

There were moments when something seemed to happen in this dark box. Nothing remotely resembling rapture, merely some assurance I'd been recognized as worthy, my designs possibly encrypted by someone who'd taken

up my cause. Forgiveness was another matter. It may have been tendered by a well-meaning spirit but it bypassed me since I was usually pretty foggy about what I needed to be forgiven for. I had trouble matching my thoughts, motives and actions with the list of general dos and don'ts I dutifully memorized. The rewards and punishments for things seemed out of whack with the versions of the bible I'd seen.

This is why I'd sometimes visit the confessional when it was empty, usually late on a Friday, and imagine a dialogue with a priest who takes the time to give me a clear blessing and help me better understand what sin was really all about. At other times I would enter just to relax, soak up the scene without thinking of any messenger who could dilute the message. My attention would drift up and away to the source, or at least where I pictured he, she or it might hang out.

I think I hear footsteps so reach over and edge the door open, but see only darkness and shadows. I close the door and return to my thoughts...

"My son, my son, are you alright?" someone says, both of his hands gripping my left armpit and apparently in the terminal stage of trying to shake me into consciousness. Light is now streaming into the confessional.

"Who are you?"
"I'm the night watchman," another man answers who's standing just outside the confessional in a halo of light that makes it hard to identify him.

I look at him, and back to the first man.

"What have I done?"

"What you doing here?" the watchman asks.

"I...I came to...the front door was open and so I..."

"...the door's always locked over night...we..."

"...no, I'm sure it was open...I was coming down the street and there were lights everywhere, a copter was circling above and I just naturally..."

"...I saw the lights, I'm the pastor here at the church, but the door...didn't you lock it up last evening?" he asks the watchman.

"I'll get the cops and..."

"...not so fast...who would break in to a church for confession when most of the congregation is fast asleep?...we've never offered graveyard shift services!"

He finishes his sentence and turns to the watchman at the same time, who looks sheepish, like when someone's fear of appearing guilty is so strong that it takes over and trumps their honesty.

"But there's no way I would leave the door open Father, I always check and recheck!"

"The Lord works his will in mysterious ways...we all mean well and sometimes..."

"...no Father, I swear I..."

"...the important thing is that everything's okay, and for you my son, you're here, you've come to us for help!"

His alarm at my violation seems to mute and he becomes more relaxed, finding a different tone. He gestures me from the con-

fessional toward a pew.

"Someone was chasing me up on the hill and I had no other...I was going toward the downtown lights and couldn't make it and..."

"...we're all pursued at times when we want to reach out and talk to someone about something that's been on our minds, and it's a sign we need to settle up."

"I need to get some sleep...settle in for a few days

My hometown has always had plenty of these dark chapels, open nearly around the clock, where different forms of family life breed and those caught in spiritual limbo can ruminate about what might be beyond good and evil, or who the latest savior might be.

-- John O'Kane

and look for someone.”

“We’re all looking...it’s a sign you’ve come.”

The watchman suddenly jerks to his right and backs toward the front of the church slowly, turning the priest’s head to meet his glance. I take the opportunity to get farther away from both and move between the pews, while the priest turns abruptly to meet my gaze, bringing the watchman’s with him as if by default. I look back and forth between the two sets of eyes in rapid succession like I’m gauging the depths of each other’s nerves in readiness for a shootout. These gestures repeat with crosscutting variations for what seems like several minutes, and instead of going for it I move toward the side of the church, dissolving the tension. The priest continues.

“I’m Father Bertrand...you can reach me anytime for confession. If God is on our side we need not look far!”

“I’m not sure yet what the sides are or where to look. I’ve just got here and am still feeling my way around.”

“What is it you want to say?”

“Could God really take my side?” I ask, running a slant pattern to the exit before he can answer, reaching the street in a rush of fresh air. I feel momentarily rejuvenated in splashes of warm, early-morning light. How different the area looks...

I found a motel yesterday up on the main drag, the Epistolay, in walking distance to the Majestic Theater and transportation to the airport. It’s strategically located on a bluff facing the harbor and set back from the street flush against the side of the hill. My room is adjacent to the office and the noise and traffic. The windows can be locked. I move the bed to the blind side of the opening door for extra precaution.

The residents don’t seem like your usual passing-through-and seeing-the sights types, though I’ve only chatted with one, a woman a couple doors down. She says she volunteers as a group therapist at a halfway house in town during the day and reads palms periodically for the late shift at a gentlemen’s club over in the harbor. She’s studying parapsychology online and is very well dressed in a collage of throwback fashions. She has a penetrating look, like she’s looking through the back of my mind for someone.

Many residents have belongings overstuffed into their vehicles, like they were hurriedly thrown in at random.

I settle back on the bed and flip through the distractions, find a baseball game and mute it. I try to take stock of the past few days, wondering how it all happened. Was this really my hometown, or some parallel universe? Perhaps if I returned to Pitchfork Prairie it would become just a bad dream.

My concentration wanes. I hear noises from another room, a heated discussion, and something about a meeting later in the evening, but it disappears in a spike of country music. I await its return, or other fragments of conversation passing through these thin walls. Private utterances and outbursts seem to take on a different quality in this arbitrary gathering of strangers. Maybe the traces

of bodies and minds and feelings in motion over years and years in the same spaces transform them into a collectively familiar story.

I become mesmerized by the wallpaper and the smell, a lemony ether, and begin to trace figures in it until I doze off.

I waken to a rush of activity, bodies back and forth between cars and rooms. I abruptly pick up the phone, tempted to call someone, but suspect it can be traced. There’s a book on the stand titled *Year of the Bible*, snippets from the New Testament. The marketing blurb is “5 minutes a day...finished in a year.”

I get started and turn to one of St. Peter’s letters that’s about how the Lord’s followers should live their lives: “Do your best to improve your faith. You can do this by adding goodness, understanding, self-control, patience, devotion to God, concern for others, and love.”

I continue but doze off again for what seems like only a few minutes, and there’s a knock at a door. At first I think it’s mine but I peek through the window and see a gang of cowgirls filing into the room a few doors down with supplies. I realize it might be a good time to head out for a stroll, and perhaps do some scouting, see a few of the old sights.

What’s the best getup to avoid notice? I don’t have much with me, but it’s getting close to twilight so I decide to slip out. On the way past the office the clerk beckons me inside. He asks if I want a weekly rate.

“No, nice place and all but gotta be flexible, and might be off on the little bird soon.”

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“What kind a deal we talkin about?”

“Depends on who’s doin the dealin and when... mean today’s Saturday and all and...well when everything kinda clears out some then we have what ya might call a shift change, if ya know what I mean...some leaves and others pop up and always there’s some new spaces on Mondays.”

“We’ll see what happens...when you need to know?”

“I’ll let ya know...proably late tomorrow...”

Someone braves into the office from the other side who seems to know the clerk and starts to whisper something, signaling the termination of our discussion. I notice his check-in desk. It has hardly anything pertaining to the motel business. A pile of rosaries nests on one corner. On the other are several St. Peter bobble-head dolls that look like they’ve been through a wringer and used in some voodoo ritual. I try and absorb the significance of this scene, but get lost in the signals.

“While yer thinkin it over, my cousin can git ya situated...he’s down on O’Farrell near the harbor...can set ya up, git ya some action in...”

“...action is what I need least of right now, wanna...”

“...what about a preacher, well...what I mean is he’s been studyin a lot and now he heals folks down the street...gets lots of em to come and can turn ya round sure as ya can blink!...place is called ‘Jesus is the Reason for the Season’.”

“I’m otta season and probably on my way to hell anyway!”

“We all headed there ventually!!”

“I’ll catch you in a while.”

The pavement seems to shake slightly, like in the first rumblings of an earthquake, as I dodge unsympathetic vehicles to reach a phone on the other side. But someone beats me to it. I continue past pawn shops and liquor stores and a string of franchises, protected by the play of shadows, and through vaguely familiar neighborhoods constipated with burglar bars. Few cars pass. An occasional pair of eyeballs bulges from a darkened window. A patch of youths fidgets on a corner, staring down anyone entering their plane. It’s like it’s much later than early evening, and not a midsummer night at all when the outdoors should teem with life. That house on the corner brings back memories.

As residences give way to scattered businesses on the fringe of downtown, it’s like the lights in the distance from the commercial core rush me, though I soon realize from the sound it’s a copter. It hovers and then circles the few blocks around me, illuminating a wide swatch of the neighborhood. Tempted to run for it, I soberly feel my way along a fence through a back yard and around the block as the copter repeats its pattern. I eventually end up a few doors from a bar, the Breviary.

It looks like your typical neighborhood haunt,

nothing too sordid or daring. Perhaps the perfect venue for a nip, or spot of grape after mass with family friends, and even with those who put the service together.

But it doesn’t seem to be the sort for juicing your attitude before mass, getting up at dawn for the jolt that gets you to the point of being able to consider what an attitude adjustment is all about, and then hit your stride to perfect it throughout the day. And it’s unlikely the ideal spot for soaking your sins over the course of it.

My hometown has always had plenty of these dark chapels, open nearly around the clock, where different forms of family life breed and those caught in spiritual limbo can ruminate about what might be beyond good and evil, or who the latest savior might be. These secular temples can hardly boost the attendance figures on Sunday. You arrive early to taste one of the same substances that consecrate mass, spirits his reverence consumes to commune with spirits, and you begin to realize a few pops later that you’re doing just fine without him, no need to move the feast elsewhere. You may even begin to feel, especially if the vibes from the congregation are right, like your body and blood are transubstantiating.

And your visions can prove it, at least until last call tells you otherwise.

I enter and find a space so dark I can barely make out the few forms scattered throughout. It seems to be transitioning between sports bar and throwback saloon,

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though the direction is unclear. There's no music, and only whispered flares of conversation. Each stares in a direction that seems unreachable by anyone else's. Either no one knows each other or everyone's so familiar that it doesn't matter. The bartender, his services not needed at the moment, reclines on a bar stool staring at an elevated TV screen on silent with his mouth wide open. He closes his mouth partially and turns to me, then back again to the muted picture...

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REMEMBERING
MLK

VAN JONES

April 4th, 2012, marked the 44th anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination. It's a good time to reflect on the state of not only Dr. King's dream, but the American dream at large. After all, Dr. King himself described his own dream as one that was "deeply rooted in the American Dream." It was a vision for an American Dream made available to all -- a dream for the many, not just the very few. But nearly five decades after his passing, it behooves us to face a disturbing truth: the dream upon which Dr. King founded his own dream is imperiled.

The ideal that Dr. King worked to extend to all was that ours could be a country in which ordinary people -- not just those with great wealth -- could work hard, play by the rules, and make a better life for themselves and their families. Dr. King, and so many others, devoted his life to making that opportunity available to Americans of all backgrounds. But today, those who work the hardest are falling the furthest behind, while those who break the rules are the ones getting ahead. And make no mistake: we know who today's dream killers are. They are in the financial sector. They are big banks on Wall Street. And they are those in the student loan business -- federal and private -- who look to drain the wealth of individuals who want to further their education.

In short, the two pathways from poverty into the middle class -- striving for a good education and home ownership -- are becoming trap doors from the middle class into poverty.

America's families face a

In short, the two pathways from poverty into the middle class -- striving for a good education and home ownership -- are becoming trap doors from the middle class into poverty.

-- Van Jones

wave of foreclosures and a turbulent mortgage crisis. In the past five years, eight million homes have been foreclosed on. One in four mortgages in

America are underwater. Stories of homeowners repeatedly applying for loan modifications only to be denied -- or worse, ignored -- are sickeningly common. Mortgage giants Fannie and Freddie should reassess the value of America's mortgages and cut the principal owed to reasonable levels. But the one man with the authority to say yes -- Ed Demarco, head of the Federal Housing Finance Authority -- refuses to do so. Furthermore, individuals seeking higher education are met with deceptive private loans from big banks, or a government trying to double interest rates on subsidized Stafford loans this July 1st.

The African-American community is especially impacted -- with black families three times more likely to be foreclosed on and more than 50 percent more likely than whites to be steered to a subprime predatory loan. This study gives all the gory details: <http://www.peri.umass.edu/681/>.

The mortgage crisis and the growing numbers of indentured students undermine what's left of the American Dream. In the spirit of Dr. King, we cannot allow this to stand. Fortunately, individuals and advocacy organizations are fighting back: groups like *Rebuild the Dream* and *New Bottom Line* are going on the offensive to strengthen what's left of America's middle class



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and to support those who are fighting to get into it.

Together these organizations launched AmericaUnderwater.org to draw attention to the wrongdoings of Ed DeMarco, Freddie Mac, Fannie Mae, and the rest of the gang. Americans across the country have submitted photos of their homes, depicting the amount their mortgage is underwater (America-Underwater.tumblr.com).

Organizations like U.S. PIRG and CREDO are also working to keep in place the plan that cut the interest rate on subsidized Stafford loans from 6.8 percent to 3.4 percent. Students who need this aid the most could end up paying up to \$5,000 more on their loans. How is that acceptable to anyone? We must encourage the pursuit of higher education -- not make it impossible to achieve.

Dr. King's generation had to fight to extend the Dream. We have to work twice as hard. We must both extend the Dream to all -- and save the dream for everyone.

Van Jones is President of RebuildtheDream.com, and author of *The Green-Collar Economy*.



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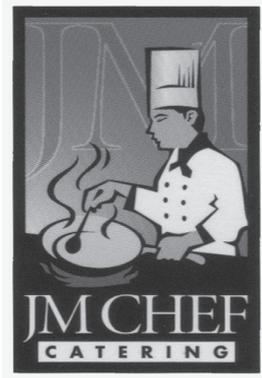
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ACCESS TO GUARANTEED HEALTH CARE

ROSE ANN DEMORO

Justices Antonin Scalia, Anthony Kennedy, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, and Stephen Breyer did not have much in common during the three days of debate on the 2010 healthcare law before the Supreme Court March 26-28. But they did share one essential characteristic. All four will never have to worry about guaranteed access to healthcare.

They won't have to worry about being bankrupted by medical bills, about being denied needed treatment their doctor recommended because some insurance bean counter deemed it 'experimental' or 'not medically necessary.' They won't have to worry about being barred from choosing the provider of their choice because they were 'out of network' or forced to keep an unwanted job to maintain their present employer-paid coverage.

Why? It's not just because of their wealth, or even their federal paychecks or federal health plan. It's because all four are over 65, and thus eligible for Medicare – which gives the four justices the same guaranteed coverage that every other American at 65 has. The same coverage that all Americans need and deserve.

Regrettably, none of those roadblocks are removed under the law the judges spent so many hours debating.

More striking, this case which dominated the court's agenda and massive media coverage this week did not need to be in front of the court at all. If the Obama administration and the Democrats on the Hill had fought for the reform they should

have pursued from the outset – lowering the Medicare age to zero.

For more than 45 years, Medicare has stood the test of time and law. It works, even when its opponents try to underfund or privatize or destabilize it. Today Medicare remains a more efficient, cost effective, humane system for delivering healthcare, and guaranteeing it to everyone who is eligible, in a far superior manner to the broken and dysfunctional privatized insurance system that is based on profit and ability to pay, not on patient need.

Sure, the Affordable Care Act does have positive elements, including some restrictions on the abuses

The percentage of adults with no health insurance at 17.3 percent in the third quarter of 2011 was the highest on record, up from 14.4 percent just three years earlier, according to Gallup.

-- Rose Ann DeMoro

that characterize the insurance industry, and the provision that lets young adults remain on their parents' health plan up to 26. But even if Obamacare survives the court challenge – a prospect looking increasingly dim – it would leave millions of Americans out in the cold.

Despite its name, the Affordable Care Act has done little to actually make healthcare affordable. Out of pocket health costs for families continue to soar. It does little to crack down on insurance companies' denial of medical treatment they don't want to pay for. It leaves 27 million Americans with no health coverage, according to a Congressional Budget office estimate in early March. And for many who are covered, it further tethers them to a callous, insurance system that treats patients as commodities, not as individuals with individual needs.

Whether the law is overturned or left in tact, our healthcare crisis will continue. A mountain of statistics reveals the ongoing nightmare faced by far too many. Just a few examples:

A February Pew Center report noted a 16 percent jump in the number of Americans heading to emergency rooms for routine dental problems, at a cost of 10 times more than preventive care, and with fewer treatment options than a dentist's office.

Medical bills for years have been the leading cause of personal bankruptcy. Increasingly they ruin people's credit as well. A recent Commonwealth Fund report found that 30 million Americans were contacted by collection agencies in 2010 because of medical bills.

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On quality, the U.S. continues to lag far behind other nations. More than 80 percent of U.S. counties trail nations with the best life expectancies, the University of Washington found last June. Some U.S. counties are more than 50 years behind their international counterparts.

There is an alternative, one that most of the other industrialized countries have long embraced; one that should be back on the table whether the Court overturns the law or not. Single payer, Medicare for all. If Medicare is good enough for

grandma, and for Scalia and Breyer and Kennedy and Ginsburg, it ought to be good enough for all of us.

Rose Ann DeMoro is executive director of the 160,000-member National Nurses United, the nation's largest union and professional association of nurses, and a national vice president of the AFL-CIO. Follow her on www.twitter.com/NationalNurses.

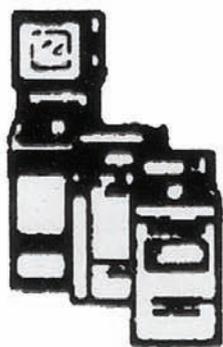
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LIVING INDEPENDENTLY

MELINA PARIS

Have you ever felt good after reading an Instruction Manual? *Living Independently*, by Roberta Griffin (www.tatepublishing.com), is a prescription for not only feeling good but empowered as well. That seems to be the whole point of this type of reference book and Griffin has weaved it together with eloquent simplicity, straight forwardness, a dash of humor and genuine care. She offers a certain guardianship to her reader without being overbearing. This comes as a huge plus for obvious reasons but also because of whom this book is primarily written for; young adults moving out on their own.

This is a stress-free and insightful read about a life event that can be daunting to a young person when choices are made on impulse rather than with practical information. Griffin relates to her readers very well, providing short narratives that present the desired behavior for crossing this threshold successfully. *This comes across as a handy tool to have when the young person is relating to family, friends, prospective employers and landlords.*

Practicality reigns. By providing visuals of checkbook ledgers, budget planning forms and vehicle MPG calculations Griffin aids the reader in a clear understanding of how to become skilled at these tasks and learn the value in them. She explains the importance of paying yourself first (a rule we all would do well to go by). Her instruction is not limited to financial matters. In her chapter, "A Nicely Added Touch," Griffin presents the benefits of mailing a thank-you note after a job interview and provides an

example of one. This type of recommendation -- to carry things out well and completely, to have good character -- is a theme of integrity that runs throughout the book and yes, it applies to the relationship with one's parents as well.

One of her suggestions that I particularly liked was about education after high school. Griffin writes: "Now your best bet for continuing your education after high school is to stay at home with your parents and hit the community college first;

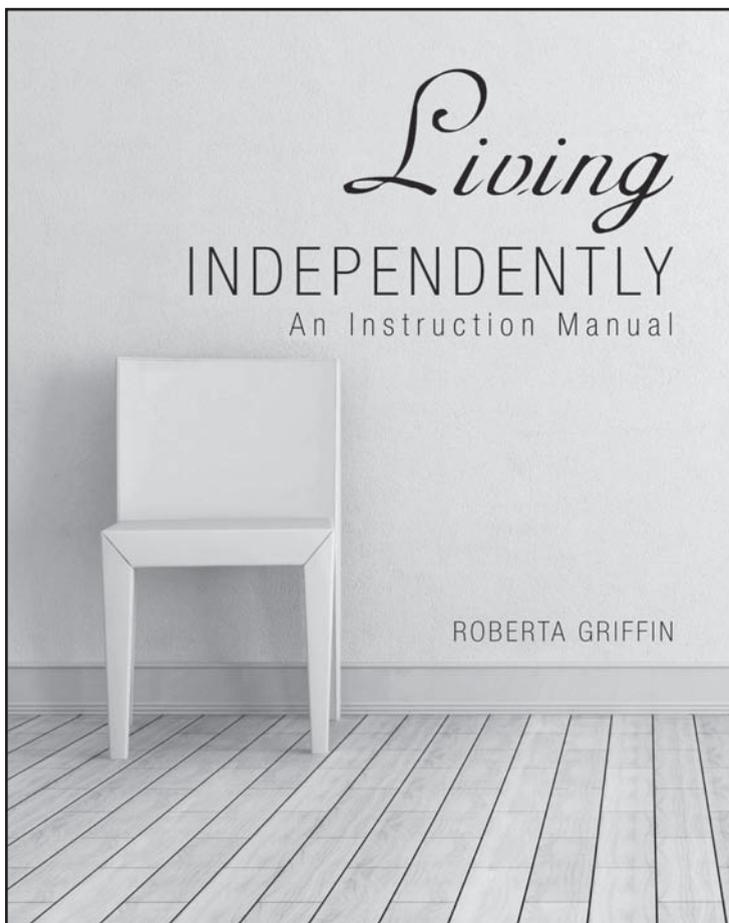
way to personal hygiene and personal growth, stopping briefly at premarital sex along the way. Her advice though is always spot on, and never comes off as patronizing.

She provides readers with addresses and phone numbers to the credit agencies, explains how to find accurate information on the internet and covers how Vocational schools and the Employment Development Department can assist with a job search and resume preparation. Griffin also shares how one can gain advantages with the disciplined use of credit, such as cards with redeemable points. One important piece of advice repeated throughout the book is to always compare costs -- on medical and car insurance, utilities -- anything so that you know you've gotten the most for your money.

As Griffin mentions, her son indirectly prompted her to write this book when he expressed concerns about moving out on his own. In this manual she has artfully mastered conveying a combination of loving motherly common sense, honesty and experiential wisdom with the Zen qualities of positivity, gratitude, forgiveness and wonder. It comes across in her advice to "practice the business of expressing little gestures of kindness" or counseling

one to wait on acquiring credit cards "until you have been able to control your finances a little more, have a bit more self-control and discipline, to give yourself the gift of time and maturity." *Living Independently* is about walking through life arming oneself with knowledge, accurate information, and *vigor* to do it well, with care and correctly - straight out of the gate!

Buy this book for the young adults you know who embark on this journey and they will surely be better prepared for it!



the tuition is much less than at a university. Once done with community college then transition into the university of your choice." She goes on to discuss living in dorms and taking online courses, as well as any time constraints one must consider.

As Griffin presents it there is always an array of decisions to make and she covers most if not all of them concisely while engaging her reader in the benefits of utilizing good choices. She explains situations from credit cards and credit checks all the

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LONG BEACH
VEGAN

DOREEN LE

The Arts District of Long Beach has come a long way since Breck Dockstader first opened his vegan café on 4th Street in 2005. Zephyr, once a lone business venture catering to a very specific clientele in a vacant area of town, is now struggling against the gentrification of its once-bohemian surroundings, as it sits nestled between high-rise apartment buildings, music stores, and clothing shops in one of Long Beach’s trendiest neighborhoods.

Dockstader, a socially-conscious animal lover in his late 30s, never foresaw the popularity that would come to surround the physical manifestation of his pet cause – that of encouraging people to eat healthy, support animal rights, and buy organic. At the time of its inception, Zephyr was the first and only restaurant in the area dedicated to furthering the vegan cause. Dockstader felt that there was a lack of awareness within the general population, so he began to host events in the hopes of bringing like-minded people together and getting the word out on veganism.

Whatever he was doing apparently worked. Vegetarianism and veganism have not only become popular lifestyle choices for millions of people, particularly in California, but animal-rights groups have gotten more and more vocal over the years. We saw in 2008 the first California initiative to raise our food more humanely. Photos of baby seals getting clubbed to death have been posted on virtually every social networking site and Internet discussion forum, and documentaries like *The Cove* have been made to encourage folks to re-think their dietary choices. Of course, it was not the efforts of Dockstader alone, but many others like him who felt passionate enough about animal rights to take a stand and say something to the public.

But popularity comes at a price. As Dockstader’s cause gained

momentum, so did the artistic community in which his café was situated. People started hanging out there and other businesses caught on. Eventually, the Arts District became so cool that it warranted residency. Once the condos and apartments went up, Dockstader began having problems with the City of Long Beach.

One of the benefits of having a business in the Arts District is that the people there have fought for the right to share their artistic endeavors with the public. Any business within the borders of Long Beach’s Arts District is allowed to do any of the following without acquiring an

entertainment permit: acoustic music performances by two musicians; film screenings; workshops and meetings; art openings; and poetry readings.

town as long as the sounds of the city did not penetrate their walls. But in an area where music performances, meetings, and movie showings are common, noise is an expected and accepted by-product one must tolerate, especially when these artistic ventures are accompanied by alcohol. It seems that the residents of the Arts District are able to have their cake and eat it too, because Zephyr’s beer and wine license restricts Dockstader from hiring any entertainment or organizing meetings. At the time of this writing, Zephyr is the only business in the Arts District that is not allowed to host events. It is ironic and



photo by John O’Kane

entertainment permit: acoustic music performances by two musicians; film screenings; workshops and meetings; art openings; and poetry readings.

Not only did Breck Dockstader see the opportunity to get the word out on animal rights, he saw the opportunity to create a haven for open minds to come together, as well as the opportunity to give struggling artists an outlet for their craft. He hosted different types of events regularly, from political movie nights to fundraisers for animal rights to meet-ups for alternative health-care groups to experimental music open-mike nights.

All of this was perfectly okay until the noise complaints rolled in. Long Beach’s hip young residents were more than happy to live down-

sad when one considers that it was probably those very events at Zephyr that led to the popularity and growth of the Arts District in the first place.

And while he has reason to believe that Zephyr alone was singled out for discrimination by the city, Dockstader seems hopeful that one day things will turn around for him. “Well, I’m not allowed to host events for now,” he keeps saying. “But I’m fighting it. There’s no reason I shouldn’t be allowed to do what everyone else is doing, especially since the whole point of having an Arts District is to be able to showcase the arts.”

In the meantime, you can still visit Zephyr and enjoy a delicious vegan meal, even if there is no live

entertainment. Dockstader's culinary repertoire reaches far and wide, as he incorporates Asian dishes, Mediterranean flavors, and even kids' items on the menu. If you're thirsty, there's vegan wine, organic beer, and my personal favorite, fair-trade coffee sweetened with brown sugar and soy milk. For my meal I enjoyed the Teriyaki

Vegetable and Tofu Bowl, a stir-fried veggie delight that was surprisingly flavorful to a carnivore like myself.

The service was prompt and friendly. The café, while small and not too busy at the time, was well-lit by giant windows and had a cozy, homey feel, assisted in part by coffee-shop couches and an upright piano,

which I will probably jump on the next time I'm there. Dockstader is not allowed to hire musicians, but there is no rule against a paying customer tickling the ivories. In case there was any question, I am definitely coming back. With any luck, there will be a professional guitarist there that I'll be able to duet with.

Green Grass of Günter

When Jesus told the Jews
Will not fight for you
His father did forsake
Flounder
U- Boat
Romans at the Gate
He must have known Fate
Fiery Steeds
Smiling Scimitar
Resurrection
Crusading Christians
Forgot Loves Code
Jerusalem Iron Horses Rode
Oscar played Tin Drum
Burned phoenix
Scream Singing
Israel - Is Real
Palace Occupied
Does art have the ability
To defeat war & hatred
Religion Certain Not
Pray Prey Pray
Sacrificing Sons of Abraham
Magic Realism ?
Pray Prey Pray
East no Peace
Gesagt Werden Leben
Say It
Peace ٱولءام الء
Reason Kant

--Mark Breza

~ Lowering The Boom ~

In the 1960s you, me, we 'Boomers' were a big problem
and into our second set of 60s "we" are still a big problem
Social Security wasn't designed for 'us', we don't assimilate well

Neo-cons don't bother asking us what we think, and rightly so,
we might dose them with Truth Sera-25, rise up over their heads
and thunderously lower the boom just to see what happens

No more consuming the many things we "can't live without"
reduce our carbon prints and quit driving ourselves insane
banking the future on high level investments in nothing

We invented "sustainability" and "green living" in the age of Formica,
discovered that the "nuclear family" was a complete waste of time,
and began recycling ideas that our Great Society didn't care about

Ideas concerning our environment, our rain forests, sky and seas
whole earth nourishment at the maximum daily requirement,
Dymaxion thinking and co-emergent spiritual wisdom

We are the last generation to be heart warmed by tabletop radios,
the last to be fascinated by Dr. Farnsworth's cathode ray tube,
and the last generation our government wants to alienate (again)

We can start enormous social fires without striking a match
without buying into the neocon prattle of saber rattling goons
bent on fear mongering, invisible power, and idiotic isolationism

Get your heads out of The Cloud ~!~

Take over the helm of our terra firma in chaos,
the mother ship is sinking beyond the horizon
and there are but few life preservers at hand

Conserve backyard plankton and dig up the rutabagas
wells are running dry and water shortages are on the rise
no wonder the Bush Family Robinson owns an aqua fir in S.A

Hitch a ride on the first divine boxcar to the end of the line,
pull up your knickers and begin hiring dowers by the dozen ~
this strange trip just got longer in the tooth

Don't regret the future ~!~ it's already tomorrow in Guam.

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