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New Perspectives on Politics, Culture, Media and Life

# clamor

January/February 2003  
Issue 18

## LUDDISM to LINUX

tackling technology's  
tough questions

**78 questions  
to ask about  
any technology**

**Third World  
Majority**

**virtual  
volunteering**

**free software**

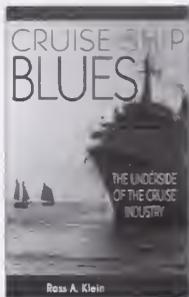
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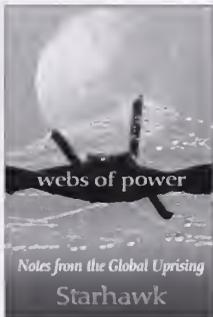


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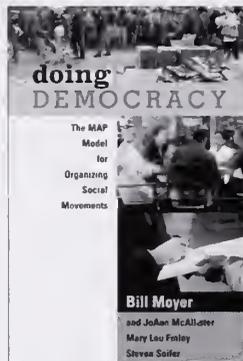


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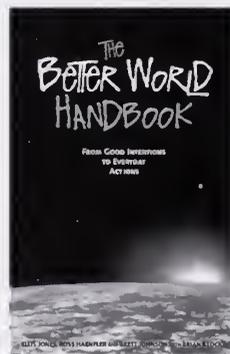


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Foreword by Kevin Danaher  
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They Would Have Given Us Candidates*

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Sometimes we're afraid that technology is about to take over our lives. At the same time, many of us hope and pray for technological advancements that will make our lives easier or better. We've come to rely on recent breakthroughs like email, cell phones, and of course, the laptop computer, to say nothing of the medical breakthroughs that we all benefit from.

But, here's the deal. Jen relies heavily on computers for both the magazine and her day job, and commutes 50 miles round trip every day in a nice car. But, she still listens to cassettes and has to call in for back-up to record a show on the VCR or watch a DVD. Jason, on the other hand, owns one of those new-fangled iPod things that stores like 2,000 songs on it and he spends 2/3 of his day behind a computer - not to mention that new iBook that he bought... where's that Apple sponsorship when you need it? Anyway Jason rides his trusty bicycle everywhere and really only drives a car when he has to leave our sleepy little town.

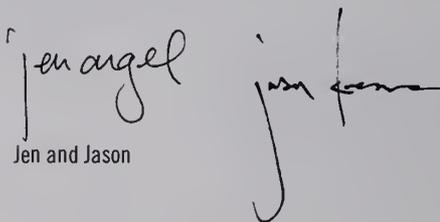
So, technophile or technophobe? Here in America, we're kinda "lucky" that we have all this crazy technology within reach and also have the power to choose selectively how to use it or incorporate it into our lives, right? The relationship between nature and technology is played out a bit differently for people in Southern Africa who have been faced with the choice of starvation or accepting genetically modified corn (p. 13). And Third World Majority has taken as it's objective redefining the relationship between women of color and digital media (p. 20). Similarly, Linux (p. 50) and open source software (p. 63) have given people more tools to subvert corporate dominance in our daily lives.

When we announced that the theme of the issue would be technology, we received the expected diversity of responses. Some wanted to write about how technology will ensure the extinction of the human race (which it arguably is trying its damndest to do). Others wanted to write about how important it is to democratize the tools of technology for people who are traditionally denied access to them. The result is what you come to expect from Clamor: varied perspectives exhibiting thoughtful analyses and creative interpretations, and a little something for everyone.

As we close out our third year of publishing, we are once again amazed at and pleased with the quality of writing and art we receive every day. Looking through this issue, the articles are important, timely, relevant - exactly the depth and insight that we found lacking in mainstream media and vibrantly present in the people we meet each and everyday. Help us continue to provide such awesome content by submitting your own words and ideas - details on how you can contribute are on page 7.

This issue we would like to specially thank Scott Puckett, guest editor, for his advice and counseling on the technology related articles in this issue — even amidst his move from San Diego, CA to Bloomington, IL (talk about culture shock!). We'd also like to thank everyone who responded to our recent letter with donations and our advertisers this issue, like newbies Green Echos and New Society Publishers, all of whom have made this issue possible in a time of financial hardship for Clamor and all independent magazines.

A lot of great things happened in the past year, and we're hoping that 2003 will be even better - and it can be, with your support. Thanks for reading.

  
Jen and Jason

CLAMOR's mission is to provide a media outlet that reflects the reality of alternative politics and culture in a format that is accessible to people from a variety of backgrounds. CLAMOR exists to fill the voids left by mainstream media. We recognize and celebrate the fact that each of us can and should participate in media, politics, and culture. We publish writing and art that exemplify the value we place on autonomy, creativity, exploration, and cooperation. CLAMOR is an advocate of progressive social change through active creation of political and cultural alternatives.

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*Above: Erik Keldsen (also on the cover),  
as photographed by Megan Holmes.*

I recently came across Scott Puckett's article ("How Much Did You Pay For Your Identity?" Jul/Aug 2002) about *The Fader*, the magazine for which I work.

For three years I and my staff have striven to be balanced, fair and objective. We champion independent bands and labels, most of whom would never appear on the radar screens of our publishers' company. We cover a huge range of subjects, in particular social/environmental issues, that would never fall anywhere near a marketing company's remit. Furthermore we have been nominated for several awards for original photography and we provide a rare and respected forum for documentary and fine art photography which again has nothing to do with the day-to-day interests of our publishers.

Furthermore, despite what is stated in your piece, no one on the editorial staff shares duties with, or is paid by, our publisher's company. The only people on our masthead who do are clearly identified as the publishers (two individuals) and the associate publisher (one individual). We continue to make a loss because of our extravagant print process. It's hardly the last bastion of corporate greed or any great cash cow for anybody.

More than anything though, we at *The Fader* would never print a piece that did not attempt to be fair and balanced, that didn't question sources other than the writer, that didn't try to pass off some cursory internet search as fact-checking, that didn't, essentially, pass muster on even the most basic standards of journalism, like this one.

I would have welcomed the opportunity to respond to the questions raised by your contributor. I fully accept that they are valid questions. However without the opportunity to address them and to illustrate the enormous and tiring lengths we go to avoid being tainted in the way this article asserts that we are, I feel you have in effect slandered us.

I am extremely disappointed by this piece. I and a very small team have striven to create a good, interesting, fresh, intelligent, opinionated, non-corporate, non-commercial magazine in a country where such a thing is extremely rare. We have chosen to document issues that most newsstand publications would shy away from for fears of their being "too political," "controversial" etc. and that is a testament not only to our efforts but also to the tolerance and support of our publishers.

Eddie Brannan *Creative Director*  
*The Fader Magazine*  
New York, New York

Only a few paragraphs of my article discuss *The Fader*. The first paragraph of my article that mentions *The Fader* consists of provably true information taken from *The Fader's* pages and *Cornerstone's* client list. It also notes the socially conscious aspects of their publication and their emphasis on cool (i.e. extreme bike construction). The claims are clearly not false and it does not overlook the non-commercial aspects of the editorial coverage.

I also note that *Cornerstone* and *The Fader's* staff are the same. In retrospect, this may be a slightly broad brush to paint the organizations with,

but I stand by it. From what I remember of my research, some additional names — ad sales, etc. — also overlap. With the exception of that statement, everything else is provably true and exists in legally binding public documents.

The rest consists of assessment and analysis. It assumes only that *Cornerstone* bills promotions clients for publicity (unless they're trading glass beads, blankets or whiskey, money is about the only recompense they have). Since so many of *Cornerstone's* clients appear in *The Fader*, it certainly has the appearance of serving as a catalog for *Cornerstone's* clients (much as *Sony Style* pitches *Sony* products). Most people wouldn't think of it like this because they don't know that *Cornerstone* publishes *The Fader*. At this point, I don't see how anyone with the above information could think of *The Fader* as anything BUT a vehicle to promote *Cornerstone's* clients. The additional content is almost irrelevant — the magazine is already tainted at this point because it doesn't disclose this connection. In addition, I never claimed that *Cornerstone* pitches *Fader* coverage to potential clients. I merely noted that a promotions firm bills its clients for publicity (whether on a monthly or per piece basis).

I wrote three carefully measured paragraphs which contained only information that I could prove to the satisfaction of the journalists who reviewed the piece and opinions that they felt were justified based in the evidence at hand.  
— Scott Puckett

I'm writing to point out a very important omission in Catherine Komp's otherwise excellent and thorough article about the verdict in the Judi Bari bombing case ("Justice for Judi," Nov/Dec 2002).

At the time of the bombing, Judi Bari was a member and organizer of the the Industrial Workers of the World (Earth First! was called Local 1, if memory serves me right), and she was explaining to California loggers how their livelihoods were actually threatened by the clear-cutting of the trees. This was an insightful mix of environmentalism and labor activism. After the bombing, Judi and Daryl sought the aid of the IWW for their defence and counter-suit, and indeed they received the sum of \$25,000. If it had not been for that help, it's entirely possible that the two defendants would have had a far weaker defence and no counter-suit at all.

Thanks for putting out another terrific issue for November/December 2002. Its theme, Sex, is a subject that always sticks to my ribs.

Bob Helms  
Philadelphia PA

I read with dismay the letter by Ravi Grover (Letters, Nov/Dec 2002) regarding youth who he does not regard as the "truly repressed." While Grover may be correct in pointing out the more evident levels of repression (discrimination, police brutality, environmental racism, etc.), I think he fails to appreciate the fact that

repression exists in subtler levels throughout society.

For instance, take a closeted queer white male living in Utah. He may have all the trappings of privilege, but that is all they are. If he wants to be able to keep his home, his job, his family, friends and all the other significant relationships in his life, he has to keep his mouth shut. Put on the appearance of straightness. Granted he has more choices than those in the examples Grover gave. But the fact that he has to make these choices is evidence of repression.

I have no doubt that the repression I deal with (being transgendered) pales in comparison with some of the examples Grover gave. But he is in no position to decide whose repression is "real" or not. What we should be doing is saying to the teens who are showing the signs of rebellion "Nice start... but what are you going to do now?" In the struggle against this system, we need all the allies we can get, and denigrating someone else's experience is no way to do that.

Emily Lynn  
Plainville, CT

The sex issue (Nov/Dec 2002) definitely raises problems for me, or at least highlight my own hang-ups. I've read much of it and have skimmed it all. The whole sex positive/sex negative and porn issue thing has always been a difficult thing for me. I grew up in a violent household and have been involved in anti-rape work, both of which make for a lot of baggage that I lug around with me whenever these types of discussions come up.

I'm not sure how I feel about some of the stuff in this issue, a disturbing place for me to be in as I've still got the impulse honed to immediately search for the correct political position on any given thing. I know I'm interested in sexuality free of domination and hierarchy and all the other fucked-upness stemming from our historical and present social arrangements. I suspect a lot of this will only be solved after the revolution (though this might be too easy a formulation since of course, how could we say the revolution was over if inequalities and hierarchies remain in any area of life?) Certainly given the power relations with which our society is shot through (not the least of which are those involving money and work), it's no surprise that no one was able to demonstrate an example of actually existing totally perfect in-no-way-problematic sexuality. It did seem to me that occasionally the articles veered close to a "no desire is illegitimate" type of stance, which I'm sympathetic to but which I just can't embrace, as it would entail abandoning my commitment to a host of political goals.

I do know that sex is too often not public enough in its discussion and that exiling these conversations to the margins does nothing to make a just and fulfilling sexuality any easier or closer. I do feel that some of the material in this issue might not meet my (slightly still too Maoist for my comfort) criteria for revolutionary or post-revolutionary sexuality, but I appreciate your raising these issues.

Even if I might disagree w/ some stuff y'all might think (and it's so hard to tell disagreement apart from worthwhile discomfort sometimes), I really respect your being courageous enough to risk offending people in order to broach conversations that we all need to be having about a very important personal and public issue.

Without forums like Clamor to get us reflecting and questioning (and experimenting! and hoping! and playing! and fantasizing!) on and in the arena of sexuality and in other arenas, we won't get anyplace worth getting. Keep on keeping on.

*Nate Holdren,  
Chicago, IL*

Lets say you are a self-confessed progressive zine doing a SEX! issue, and you put two women on the cover in basically their underwear and use intrusive camera angles (photographing them from on high lets say) — is that pretty much a mainstream media technique or a limit-pushing progressive zine technique? Check out a "lad-mag" like Maxim, Stuff, or FHM if you need to make a comparison.

And why not two young men? Two elderly women? An overweight woman and a thin man? Or any other combination that really would speak to the reality that everyone is a sexual being. I would say thats a pretty unhealthy view of sex you got going there on your cover.

Your cover was like every other cover trying to play on the sensationalism usually associated with a "Let's Talk About Sex" issue. Why not a couple (you pick the combination) just having sex like people do all over the world every single day? And not sensationalizing or fetishizing the act.

I don't really want to check out a progressive zine that isn't even progressive enough to try to understand that it might just be a little fucked up to have a "Sex!" issue and put two young slim conventionally attractive women on the cover photographed from above dressed in lingerie. I would have thought you'd pay at least a little attention to that, and I'm surprised you didn't.

*Sanji  
Chicago, IL*

Interesting that two "radical" publications have cover stories about "punk porn" in the same month, and the "less political" of the two put Clamor to shame. Your short and shallow article ("Punk Porn"

Nov/Dec 2002) didn't even mention the most glaring critique... that every single one of the women on the interviewed sites looks like they crawled off the pages of any traditional porn publication. Wash out the pink hair and each one of these girls is sexy and beautiful by mainstream standards. What's so punk about that? Totally disappointing that it didn't occur to you to include a critique at all. What's the "new perspective" in that?

*Quinn  
Durham, NC*

I was a bit disappointed in the one article on porn in your "Aging" issue, by the professor ("You Are What You Eat," Sep/Oct 2002). He made some weird, fallacious logical jumps. I was almost inspired to write him, but then got lazy. Anyway, you guys more than made up for it with this last issue. Good articles on sex, a lot of good reviews, and I liked the article by the woman who had worked at *The Comics Journal* — I'm assuming ("Fangirls," Nov/Dec 2002).

*Sean Carswell  
Los Angeles, CA*

Wanted to let Clamor know that I love your magazine. Thanks for the truth and courage. Last issue's essays on aging (Sep/Oct 2002) are the best I have ever read on the subject and the current issue's synopsis on corporate crime ("The Era of Financial Scandals," Nov/Dec 2002) is a jewel. Much gratitude for helping me keep my eyes on the prize in this terrible time.

*Sue Skinner  
Astoria, Oregon*

Your goals for the sex issue (Nov/Dec 2002), expressed in the letter from the editors, is impressive. The issue is definitely thought provoking, and we have enjoyed the conversations it has sparked among our friends. You do awesome work. Thanks for all you do.

*Jenny & Aaron Bruenger  
Minneapolis, MN*

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## submissions

Clamor is built from everyday folks like you. Please take some time to contact us if you have any ideas that you would like to see in Clamor.

Clamor accepts submissions of printed work and artwork on an ongoing basis. On our website, Clamormagazine.org, under the heading "participate," there are deadlines and topic suggestions which may help you determine when, and what, to contribute. However, many works are accepted regardless of whether they fit with the cover story, or theme, of an issue.

Got an idea? Let us have it! Tell us about what is important to you, what is going on in your community, or someone (or something) you find inspiring. If a magazine was made just for you, what would you want it to include?

Drafts should be submitted to info@clamormagazine.org (preferred) or to Clamor, PO Box 1225, Bowling Green, OH 43402. Written works should be less than 2,500 words.



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### CORRECTIONS:

Kari Iyerson sex trafficking originally appeared in LIP Magazine, www.lipmagazine.org.

The web site for photographer Jodeen Vance is belladonnafetish.com. Her work appears on the cover of the Nov/Dec 2002 issue.

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**Robert Biswas-Diener** (p. 56) travels the world and studies quality of life among remote cultures. His work with the Maasai of Kenya appeared in a previous issue of *Clamor* (Jul/Aug 2002). He can be reached at [studyhappiness@aol.com](mailto:studyhappiness@aol.com).

**Jeff Conant** (p. 13) is a writer and activist based in the San Francisco Bay Area. He has written about social justice struggles in Chiapas, Honduras, and Ecuador, has translated *Wind in the Blood: Mayan Healing and Chinese Medicine*, and currently works as coordinator of a popular education project on environmental health for the Hesperian Foundation, a non-profit publisher of books about health and social justice. He can be reached at [jeff@hesperian.org](mailto:jeff@hesperian.org).

**Dave Crosland** (p. 13) is a born-again "nice guy" with a penchant for dairy products and whiny girl-rock. When he's not taking orders from his beautiful wife, Samantha, Dave can be caught acting as a staff writer and illustrator for *Tastes Like Chicken*, under the pseudonym "Debbie." You can see more of his work at [www.tlchicken.com](http://www.tlchicken.com), and contact him at [debbie@tlchicken.com](mailto:debbie@tlchicken.com).

**Antonino D'Ambrosio** (p. 34) is the co-founder/director of La Lutta New Media Collective, an alternative media organization based in New York City. La Lutta NMC is currently working with People-Link (the group Antonino features in this issue of *Clamor*) on a series of projects including La Lutta NMC's *Active Knowledge Program* and a video project *Voices of the Unconquered*. Check out [www.lalutta.org](http://www.lalutta.org) to learn more about the projects, programs and people of La Lutta NMC.

**Chellis Glendinning** (p. 26) is a psychologist and award-winning author whose works include the acclaimed *My Name is Chellis and I'm in Recovery from Western Civilization*, and *When Technology Wounds*, nominated for the Pulitzer Prize. A pioneer in the field of ecopsychology, her specialty is the ecological and human costs of technological progress. She lives in rural New Mexico where she works with Chicano and Native people for environmental justice and cultural preservation.

**Katherine Glover** (p. 63) is a Minneapolis-based freelance writer, teacher, and performance poet. She just received her International Teaching Certificate in Madrid, Spain, and she hopes to travel the world, writing and teaching English. She can be reached at [katherineglover@yahoo.com](mailto:katherineglover@yahoo.com).

When not found "working," **Shawn Granton** (p. 29) can be randomly spotted at various locations throughout the Rose City. Maybe you'll find him at one of the non-profits he volunteers for (IPRC, NPDX Bike Works) or maybe you'll find him at a coffee shop. Or maybe drunk. We don't know. If you do see him, you can ask him if he's ever going to finish the next issue of his comic *Ten Foot Rule*, because frankly we're giving up hope. Send random small bills to P.O. Box 14185, Portland, OR 97293-0185, or nag him at [modernindustry@hotmail.com](mailto:modernindustry@hotmail.com)

**Yael Grauer** (p. 46) is currently living in a tent in the desert, studying permaculture and organic farming/gardening. Yael's writing has been featured in numerous publications, including *Slingshot* and the *Earth First!*

*Journal*. She also does her own zine and proofreads manuscripts for fun and profit. Yael has unhealthy obsessions with chocolate, herbs, books, faeries, cafes, gypsies, witches, bike messengers and kava kava. Yael loves mail and e-mail more than almost anything. You can send her nice letters c/o Clamor and e-mail her at [yael@dojo.tao.ca](mailto:yael@dojo.tao.ca).

**Helen Griffin** (p. 47) is a graduate from Kendall College of Art & Design. She is currently residing in Michigan, where she's constantly dodging bill collectors, cooking fried chicken and starting her freelance career. Helen's illustrations can be seen in *Savoy Magazine*, *LIA Magazine*, and at [www.helengriffin.com](http://www.helengriffin.com).

Photographer **Megan Holmes** (cover, p. 25) is based in Chicago. Lately her focus has been on independent artists and musicians. Her work has recently appeared in *Venus Zine*, *Devil In The Woods*, as well as the Tigerstyle Records release "Goldfish" by K.

In addition to having five point five AM/FM radio sets, a second-story apartment in Little Beirut and the navigational instinct of a woodsman's daughter, **Catherine Komp** (p. 60) also has a pretty kick-ass gig at community radio station KBOO ([www.kboo.org](http://www.kboo.org)). Take it to another level at [pmnews@kboo.org](mailto:pmnews@kboo.org).

**John Konsumer** (p. 47) works with an anarchist collective that provides services to activists and community groups in a way that's effective, but also anti-hierarchical and totally cool. His collectivemates do their best to tolerate his lame addictions without encouraging him. You can reach him at [humannednotcorporategreed@yahoo.com](mailto:humannednotcorporategreed@yahoo.com)

Retired by collusion in Cleveland, Ohio, USA, Inc. **Matt Kuchna** (p. 49) will work for food, but would prefer change. Contact him at [billypeppers@earthlink.net](mailto:billypeppers@earthlink.net).

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**Stephanie Mills** (p. 25) is a writer and lecturer who has lived in Northwest Lower Michigan since 1984. Her most recent book is *Epicurean Simplicity* (Island Press / Shearwater Books, 2002).

In addition to teaching English in Japan, **Christopher Mims** (p. 28) has studied schizophrenia in Warsaw, volunteered as a machinist in San Francisco, interned as a writer at the National Zoo and is currently kicking it old school as a tech in a neuroscience lab at GSU, Atlanta. He is a regular contributor to <http://arich.net/smarch>.

**Scott Puckett** (guest editor) is a former member of the Advanced Development team in Intel's Network Equipment Division. He has consulted with firms including Sony and Hewlett-Packard and has presented papers and given talks to audiences in the United States and around the world about technological implementations and network architectures.

His experience includes documentation, testing, design, development, and research. He dabbles in Tcl, can proof C, loves CSS and prefers FreeBSD to Windows. He can be contacted at [puckett@crash.cts.com](mailto:puckett@crash.cts.com).

**David Rees** (p. 66) is author of the self-published comic collections *My New Fighting Technique is Unstoppable* and *My New Filing Technique is Unstoppable*. An accomplished performer, having fronted a rock band for six years, he has given tongue-in-cheek "lectures" about his comics at Galapagos Art Space in Williamsburg and Quimby's bookstore in Chicago. A 1994 graduate of Oberlin College, he lived in Boston for most of the 1990s, moving to Brooklyn, NY last year.

**Hannah Sassaman** (p. 44) is a media democracy activist with the Philadelphia Independent Media Center (<http://www.phillyimc.org>) and the Prometheus Radio Project (<http://www.prometheusradio.org>). She writes and produces radio plays for Radio Volta (<http://www.radiovolta.org>). If you would like a CD of her plays, or would like to discuss the free radio movement, write her at [hannahjs@prometheusradio.org](mailto:hannahjs@prometheusradio.org).

**Ryan Singel** (p. 14) is a freelance writer who lives in San Francisco. His writing has appeared in numerous publications including *Lip Magazine*, *Wired News*, and the *San Francisco Examiner*.

**Thenmozhi Soundararajan** (p. 20) is a filmmaker, singer, and grassroots media activist. As a second generation Tamil Dalit/Untouchable woman, she strives to connect grassroots organizers in developing countries with media resources that can widen their base of resistance. She was the director and founder of the Center for Digital Storytelling's national community programs. She is in residence at the MIT Center for Reflective Community Practice writing about her experiences with community-based digital storytelling. She is also a 2001-2002 Eureka foundation fellow. Recently she was featured in *Utne Reader* as one of thirty visionaries under thirty. She is a co-founder and executive director of Third World Majority ([www.thirdworldmajority.org](http://www.thirdworldmajority.org)).

**Dan Spalding** (p. 53) is a freelance journalist and tech reviewer in the Bay Area. You can reach him at [dan@danspalding.com](mailto:dan@danspalding.com), or at [www.danspalding.com](http://www.danspalding.com)

**Andrew Stern** (p. 60) is a documentary photographer who has been traveling the world for the past few years working on a wide range of projects. He recently returned from northern Greenland, and past projects include traveling with a caravan of Indymedia activists throughout South America to document the spectrum of creative resistance blossoming there after the collapse and uprising in Argentina during the winter of 2001. He is now getting ready to return to Kenya, to continue his work among the Maasai. You can contact him at: [expectresistance@yahoo.com](mailto:expectresistance@yahoo.com).

**Wil Wheaton** (p. 50) is an actor and writer, living in Los Angeles. He knows exactly what you're up to, and your parents are going to get a call from him. Find out what he's up to at [www.wilwheaton.net](http://www.wilwheaton.net).

**Christine Wong** (p. 26) is a Chinese American illustrator, designer, and youth worker from Oakland, CA. She is also the Art Director at *YO! Youth Outlook Magazine*. You can see her work on street lamps in East Oakland, in movement strategy centers, and at [ChristineWong.org](http://ChristineWong.org).

**JT Yost** (p. 50) wasn't aware that there was a web site featuring a plethora of photos depicting a shirtless Wil Wheaton until quite recently. He found this upsetting. Please send moral support to [yostt@hotmail.com](mailto:yostt@hotmail.com) or see drawings of things other than shirtless Wil Wheatons at [www.jtyost.com](http://www.jtyost.com)



# TECHNOTOPIA

## **SUPERCOMPUTERS, ROBOT WARS, AND SINGULARITY**

There is no question that technological growth trends in science and industry are increasing exponentially. There is, however, a growing debate about what this runaway acceleration of ingenuity may bring. A number of respected scientists and futurists now are predicting that technological progress is driving the world toward a "Singularity" — a point at which technology and nature will have become one. At this juncture, the world as we have known it will have gone extinct and new definitions of "life," "nature," and "human" will take hold.

"We are on the edge of change comparable to the rise of human life on Earth," San Diego University Professor of Computer Science Vernor Vinge first warned the scientific community in 1993. "Within 30 years, we will have the technological means to create superhuman intelligence. Shortly after, the human era will end."

Some scientists and philosophers have theorized that the very purpose of life is to bring about the Singularity. While leading technology industries have been aware of the Singularity concept for some time, there are concerns that, if the public understood the full ramifications of the Singularity, they would be reluctant to accept many of the new and untested technologies such as genetically engineered foods, nanotechnology, and robotics.

### **MACHINE EVOLUTION**

A number of books on the coming Singularity are in the works and will soon appear. In 2003, the sequel to the blockbuster film "The Matrix" will delve into the philosophy and origins of Earth's machine-controlled future. Matrix cast members were required to read *Wired* editor Kevin Kelly's 1994 book, *Out of Control: The Rise of Neo-biological Civilization*. Page one reads, "The realm of the born — all that is nature — and the realm of the made — all that is humanly constructed — are becoming one."

Meanwhile, Warner Brothers has embarked on the most expensive film of all time — a \$180 million sequel called "Terminator 3: Rise of the Machines." The film is due out in 2003; a good decade before actual machine evolution is predicted to accelerate "out of control," plunging human civilization towards the Singularity.

words James John Bell  
photos Jason Lindsey

Central to the workings of the Singularity are a number of “laws” — one of which is known as Moore’s Law. Intel Corp. cofounder Gordon E. Moore noted that the number of transistors that could fit on a single computer chip had doubled every year for six years from the beginnings of integrated circuits in 1959. Moore predicted that the trend would continue, and it has — although the doubling rate was later adjusted to an 18-month cycle. Today, millions of circuits are found on a single miniscule computer chip and technological progress is accelerating at an exponential rather than a linear growth rate.

In his book *The Clock of the Long Now*, Stewart Brand discusses another law — Monsanto’s Law — which states that the ability to identify and use genetic information doubles every 12 to 24 months. This exponential growth in biological knowledge is transforming agriculture, nutrition, and healthcare in the emerging life-sciences industry.

In 2005, IBM plans to introduce “Bluc Gene,” a computer that can perform one million-billion calculations-per-second — about 1/20th the power of the human brain. This computer could transmit the entire contents of the Library of Congress in less than two seconds. According to Moore’s Law, computer hardware will surpass human brainpower in the first decade of this century. Software that emulates the real world — “artificial societies” — may take a few more years to evolve.

## RISE OF ARTIFICIAL WORLDS

Connected via phone lines and the Ethernet, over 400,000 people “live and work” in the fantasy game EverQuest’s world of Norrath. At any given moment there are 60,000 “avatars” working and interacting. These avatars are characters controlled by players sitting at their terminals who gain skills and items while adventuring. Many EverQuest players use the online trade sites, like eBay, to exchange experienced characters and items for actual currency. This phenomenon is similar to the trading of baseball cards, POGs, and Magic cards except that the characters and items in question do not actually exist in any physical way whatsoever.

Edward Castronova, of the economics department at California State University at Fullerton, studied thousands of EverQuest transactions performed through eBay to determine the real-world economic value generated by the inhabitants of Norrath. He found that Norrath’s gross national product per-capita is \$2,266. If Norrath was a country, it would be the 77th wealthiest in the world, just behind Russia. It turns out that Norrath’s virtual currency is more valuable in the U.S. than the Yen. EverQuest players earn an average of \$3.42 for every hour spent playing the game, more than the minimum wage in many Third World countries.

Castronova says that because of the social importance attached to the game, EverQuest’s economy can be studied like any normal economy, even though Norrath is a world of magic and fantasy. Castronova believes that virtual worlds like Norrath could eventually become more closely linked with the real world. “Virtual worlds may be the future of e-commerce, and perhaps the internet itself.” Launched in 1999 by Sony, EverQuest survived the dot.com crash at the end of the millennium and became the largest role playing game on the internet.

## TECHNOLOGIC GLOBALIZATION

Physicists, mathematicians, and scientists like Vernor Vinge and Ray Kurzweil have identified through their accelerated technological change theories the likely boundaries of the Singularity and have predicted with confidence the effects leading up to it over the next couple of decades.

The majority of people closest to these theories and laws — the tech sector — can hardly wait for the Singularity to arrive. The true

believers call themselves “extropians,” “post-humans” and “transhumanists” and are actively organizing not just to bring the Singularity about, but to counter what they call “techno-phobes” and “neo-luddites” — critics like Greenpeace, Earth First!, and the Rainforest Action Network.

The Progress Action Coalition (Pro-Act), formed in June 2001, fantasizes about “the dream of true artificial intelligence... adding a new richness to the human landscape never before known.” The Pro-Act web site [[www.progressaction.org](http://www.progressaction.org)] features several sections where the strategies and tactics of environmental groups and foundations are targeted for “countering.”

Pro-Act, AgBioworld, Biotechnology Progress, Foresight Institute, the Progress Freedom Foundation, and other industry groups that desire accelerated scientific progress acknowledge that the greatest threat to technological progress comes not just from environmental groups, but from a small faction of the scientific community — where one voice stands out.

## THE WARNING

In April 2000, a wrench was thrown into the arrival of the Singularity by an unlikely source — Sun Microsystems’ Chief Scientist Bill Joy. Joy co-founded Sun Microsystems, helped create the UNIX computer operating system, and developed the Java and Jini software systems — systems that helped give the Internet “life.”

In a now-infamous cover story in *Wired* magazine, “Why the Future Doesn’t Need Us,” Joy warned of the dangers posed by developments in genetics, nanotechnology, and robotics. Joy’s warning of the impacts of exponential technologic progress run amok gave new credence to the coming Singularity. Unless things change, Joy predicted, “We could be the last generation of humans.” Joy has warned that “knowledge alone will enable mass destruction” and termed this phenomenon “knowledge-enabled mass destruction” (KMD). The *Times of London* compared Joy’s statement to Einstein’s 1939 letter to President Roosevelt, which warned of the dangers of the nuclear bomb.

The technologies of the 20th century gave rise to nuclear, biological, and chemical (NBC) technologies that, while powerful, require access to vast amounts of raw (and often rare) materials, technical information, and large-scale industries. The 21st century technologies of genetics, nanotechnology, and robotics (GNR), however, will require neither large facilities nor rare raw materials.

The threat posed by GNR technologies becomes further amplified by the fact that some of these new technologies have been designed to be able to “replicate” — i.e., they can build new versions of themselves. Nuclear bombs did not sprout more bombs and toxic spills did not grow more spills. If the new self-replicating GNR technologies are released into the environment, they could be nearly impossible to recall or control.

## GLOBALIZATION AND SINGULARITY

Joy understands that the greatest dangers we face ultimately stem from a world where global corporations dominate — a future where much of the world has no voice in how the world is run. The 21st century GNR technologies, he writes, “are being developed almost exclusively by corporate enterprises. We are aggressively pursuing the promises of these new technologies within the now-unchallenged system of global capitalism and its manifold financial incentives and competitive pressures.”

Joy believes that the system of global capitalism, combined with our current rate of progress, gives the human race a 30- to 50-percent chance of going extinct around the time the Singularity happens. “Not only are these estimates not encouraging,” he adds, “but they do not include the probability of many horrid outcomes that lie short of extinction.”

Nobel Prize-winning atmospheric chemist Paul Crutzen contends that if chemists earlier in the last century had decided to use bromine instead of chlorine to produce commercial coolants (a mere quirk of chemistry), the ozone hole over Antarctica would have been far larger, would have lasted all year, and would have severely affected life on Earth. "Avoiding that was just luck," stated Crutzen.

It is very likely that scientists and global corporations will miss key developments (or, worse, actively avoid discussion of them). A whole generation of biologists has left the field for the biotech and nanotech labs. As biologist Craig Holdredge, who has followed biotech since its early beginnings in the 1970s, warns: The science of "biology is losing its connection with nature."

## **CLONE WARS**

In his 1972 speech "The Android and the Human," science fiction visionary Philip K. Dick told his audience "machines are becoming more human. Our environment, and I mean our manmade world of machines, is becoming alive in ways specifically and fundamentally analogous to ourselves." In the near future, Dick prophesied, a human might shoot a robot only to see it bleed from its wound. When the robot shoots back, it may be surprised to find the human gush smoke. "It would be rather a great moment of truth for both of them," Dick added.

Present-day cloning, nanotechnology, and robotics are blurring the lines between nature and machine. While laboratory-created biotech and robotic life forms proliferate, nature experiences a catastrophic decline. These technologies represent as great a threat to the ancient natural order of our world as they do the modern political one. This is why the U.S. military is aggressively backing research in many of these new technologies.

It wasn't until 1963 that British scientist J.B.S. Haldane, inspired

by experiments to copy a frog, coined the word "clone." Dolly, the world's most famous sheep, was cloned in 1997 from the udder cells of an adult ewe. The "inside joke" around the naming of Dolly speaks volumes about the scientific community's "boys with toys" complex. Embryologist Ian Wilmut admitted, "No one could think of a more impressive set of mammary glands than Dolly Parton's."

Ironically, some in the scientific community are banking on the work of the women's movement to justify cloning in the U.S. Any law banning reproductive cloning would ultimately run up against the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling in *Roe v. Wade*, which, by upholding the right of a woman to choose an abortion, arguably implies that the state cannot interfere with how she chooses to reproduce.

In November 2001, Advanced Cell Technology of Massachusetts jarred the nation's focus away from the recession and terrorism when it announced that it had succeeded in cloning early stage human embryos. Debate on the topic stayed equally divided between those who support therapeutic cloning and those, like the American Medical Association, who want an outright ban.

## **WHEN ROBOTS BLEED**

The word "robot" (Czech for "forced labor") was coined by Karel Capek in the 1920 play "R.U.R." (Rossum's Universal Robots) in which machines assume the drudgery of factory production, then develop feelings and proceed to wipe out humanity in a violent revolution. While the robots in "R.U.R." could represent the "nightmare vision of the proletariat seen through middle-class eyes," as science fiction author Thomas Disch has suggested, they also are testament to the persistent fears of manmade technology run amok.

Similar themes have manifested themselves in popular culture and folklore since at least medieval times. One such legend, from 16th century Prague, centers around Rabbi Löw and the Jewish legend

**The real challenge is to mix man and machines ... It will be a loose ballet at first. But eventually, the systems will be linked to each other, sharing information and deciding among them who has the best shot."**

— Colonel Leahy, program director for the Gnat



of the golem. After molding the golem, a statue or figure of a man produced from mud or clay, and endowing it with life, Rabbi Löw was forced to destroy the clay creature after it ran amok. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* makes reference to this legend in the character of Golem. Here a humanoid creature is transformed by the "technology" of the one ring into an immortal. In an ironic twist, Tolkien's Golem is brought to life on the silver screen via computer animation. It is truly a golem now, enchanted by programmers and interacting with the humans in the film.

While some might dismiss these stories simply as popular paranoia, robots are already being deployed in the real world and are poised to replace the more deadly duties of the modern soldier. The Pentagon is replacing soldiers with sensors, vehicles, aircraft, and weapons that can be operated by remote control or are autonomous. Pilot-less aircraft played an important role in the recent bombings of Afghanistan, and a model called the Gnat was recently sent to conduct surveillance flights in the Philippines.

"The real challenge is to mix man and machines," said Colonel Leahy, program director for the Gnat. "It will be a loose ballet at first. But eventually, the systems will be linked to each other, sharing information and deciding among them who has the best shot."

Leading the Pentagon's remote-control warfare effort is the Northern Virginia-based Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency. The agency is working with Boeing to develop the X-45 unmanned combat air vehicle. The 30-foot-long windowless planes will carry up to 12 bombs, each weighing 250-pounds. George W. Bush enabled such research by increasing the military's already inflated budget, and in a way they're thanking him for it: the X-45 looks exactly like a flying "W."

According to military analysts, as early as 2007, the "W" will be used to attack radar and anti-aircraft installations. By 2010, they will be programmed to distinguish friends from foes without consulting humans and independently attack targets in designated areas. By 2020, robotic planes and vehicles will direct remote-controlled bombers toward targets, robotic helicopters will coordinate driverless convoys, and unmanned submarines will clear mines and launch cruise missiles.

Rising to the challenge of "mix[ing] man and machine," MIT's Institute for Soldier Nanotechnologies (backed by a five-year, \$50 million U.S. Army grant) is busy innovating materials and designs to create military uniforms that rival the best science fiction. Human soldiers themselves are being transformed into modern cyborgs through robotic devices and nanotechnology. Soldiers may one day very soon, as Dick envisioned, "gush smoke."

## SINGULARITY AND THE SIXTH EXTINCTION

The 2002 International Conference on Robotics and Automation, hosted by the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, kicked off its technical session with a discussion on "biorobots," the melding of living and artificial structures into a cybernetic organism or cyborg.

"In the past few years, the biosciences and robotics have been getting closer and closer," Palio Dario, director of the Advanced Robotics Technology and Systems Lab. "More and more, biological models are used for the design of biometric robots, [and] robots are increasingly used by neuroscientists as clinical platforms for validating biological models." Artificial constructs are beginning to approach the scale and complexity of living systems.

Some of the scientific "breakthroughs" expected in the next few years promise to make cloning and robotics seem rather benign. The merging of technology and nature has already yielded some shocking progeny. Consider these examples:

- o Researchers at the State University of New York in New York City have turned a living rat into a radio-controlled automaton, using three

- electrodes placed in the animal's brain. The animal can be remotely steered through an obstacle course, making it twist, turn, and jump on demand.

- o In May eight elderly residents of Florida were willfully injected with microscopic silicon identification chips encoded with medical information, which made them "scannable just like a jar of peanut butter in the supermarket checkout line." Applied Digital Solutions Inc., the maker of the chip, will soon have a prototype of a device able to receive GPS satellite signals and transmit a person's location.

- o Human embryos have been successfully implanted and grown in artificial wombs. The experiments were halted after a few days to avoid violating invitro fertilization regulations (see *Earth First! Journal* March-April 2002).

- o Researchers in Israel have fashioned a "bio-computer" out of DNA that is capable of handling a billion operations per second with 99.8 percent accuracy. Reuters reports that these bio-computers are so minute that "a trillion of them could fit inside a test tube."

- o In England, University of Reading Professor Kevin Warwick has implanted microchips in his body to remotely monitor and control his physical motions. During Warwick's Project Cyborg experiments, computers were able to remotely monitor his movements and open doors at his approach.

- o Engineers at the U.S. Sandia National Labs have built a remote-controlled spy robot equipped with a TV scanner, microphone, and chemical micro-sensor. The robot weighs one ounce and is smaller than a dime. Lab scientists predict that the micro-bot could prove invaluable in protecting "U.S. military and economic interests."

The International Union for Conservation of Nature, the International Botanical Congress, and a majority of the world's biologists believe that a global "mass extinction" is already underway. "The speed at which species are being lost is much faster than any we've seen in the past — including those related to meteor collisions," said University of Tennessee biodiversity expert Daniel Simberloff. As a direct result of human activities, including resource extraction, industrial agriculture, the introduction of non-native animals, and population growth, up to one-fifth of all living species — mostly in the tropics — are expected to disappear within 30 years.

A 1998 Harris poll of the 5,000 members of the American Institute of Biological Sciences found 70 percent believed that what has been termed "the sixth extinction" is now underway. A simultaneous Harris poll found that 60 percent of the public was totally unaware of the impending biological collapse. Nature and technology are not just evolving; they are competing and combining with one another. Unless changes are enacted now on a global level, Mother Earth may one day be better known as our "motherboard." Let's just hope it doesn't rust. ★

### Resources

**The Last Wizards** [[www.lastwizards.com](http://www.lastwizards.com)] is a web site and printed zine that posts weekly articles on the convergence of nature and technology, the resurgence of occult studies, radical eco-defense, culture jamming, and magical anarchism.

**The Foresight Institute's** [[www.foresight.org](http://www.foresight.org)] May 2000 conference on "Confronting Singularity" prompted Bill Joy to issue his famous warning about technology's threat to human survival.

**Ray Kurzweil's** web site [[www.kurzweilai.net](http://www.kurzweilai.net)] where scientists and technological critics discuss and debate the future of technology.

# We Want Grits!

## Biotech in Africa and the Question of Choice

words Jeff Conant  
art Dave Crossland



"If you have to test the depth of a river, do not put both legs into the water." — Zambian proverb

★★★

There is drought and famine in southern Africa.

You ask, what could be more boring or less noteworthy? Business as usual in southern Africa. But this famine is different. It is particular, distinct, notable. For me, at least, this famine is different *because I am here to see it.*

The dust of Mozambique is red and thick in Niassa, a remote province in the far north of the country, just below the Tanzanian border, at the Eastern edge of Lake Malawi where the ignoble Doctor Livingston breathed his last breath. The Land Rover I travel in is shaken loose of its springs and blowing a thick red cloud behind it that coats the children running by and the men on bicycles and the women walking slowly upright with piles of wood and buckets of water on their heads. I pass village after village, sparse, tiny huts of mud and thatch and tinier thatch houses for keeping pigeons and storing corn. Outside the villages the earth rolls in waves where the people with their ancient hoes have mounded it in ridges to plant manioc and maize.

Between the villages are long, low thatch buildings. They look like they might be community houses where villagers gather to sing and share stories. But these huts are not for gathering in song. These huts are for drying tobacco, the best selling crop in these parts. Malawi, the country to the West of here, is one of the world's tobacco centers, and buyers walk across the border and throw heavy coins at the farmers here who cannot seem to grow enough grain to even feed their families. The tobacco travels from here through Malawi and on to Harare, Zimbabwe, where auctioneers handle it, sniff it, and eventually — if they like it — buy it for processing in Holland and Virginia and who-knows-where-else.

I have been in Southern Africa for several weeks, having stayed on after the end of the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa. There, among the conference halls and work sessions, and in the news headlines, famine hung like a shadow waiting just outside the city and just outside the ken of the diplomats and bureaucrats. And here, in the remote bush of Mozambique, signs of famine are in the lean faces of the villagers and in the dust of the fields they hoe under a rainless sky.

But perhaps famine is too strong a word. The term used by international aid agencies and politicians is "*Food Crisis.*" Food crisis is less, I don't know, *biological*, than famine. It is the operative term



governments of Mozambique, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe were, of course, grateful. But they had one reservation — one tiny doubt which clouded the whole story. In fact their doubt made them seem just ever so ungrateful.

Their doubt was this: they knew that the United States produces vast amounts of *genetically engineered* grains. And that these grains, when planted, grow into specialized varieties. And that these varieties are so specialized that you need to buy *new seed* every year to continue growing them. And that, furthermore, when these grains shed their pollen, it infects local varieties. And the local varieties then develop the traits of the *genetically engineered* grains, so that farmers will then need to buy new seed every year until the end of time. Mozambique, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe knew this because it had happened in Mexico, and many Mexicans were very unhappy about it.

Many Mexicans were very unhappy about it because it seriously fucked with their *food security*.

So, when the immediate *food crisis* broke out, these countries, led by Zambia and Zimbabwe, felt compelled, against all odds, to avoid having this famine turn into a long-term state of food insecurity — anymore than it already was. Although, in fact, their compulsion to think in terms of future needs, and not just the present crisis, made them seem just ever so ungrateful.

Their doubt compelled them to ask this question:



**“Genetically engineered foods have become the site for testing democracy and truth.”**

**—Vandana Shiva**

smiling gratefully as they received *genetically engineered grain*.

Mozambique, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe hesitated.

*The world was watching.*

*Lives were in the balance.*

*The future of the region was at stake.*

Finally Mozambique and Malawi said, yes, we want the *food aid*.

*And the world breathed a sigh of relief.*

And then, against all reason, Zambia said no, we do not want the food aid. Colin Powell, speaking from his diplomatic pulpit in Johannesburg said, “They’re crazy.”

*continued on the next page*

**“I hope that people will connect and someone will change the world. I don’t think we [Craigslist] are going to save the world. Someone else is going to do that. We just intend to provide the platform.”**

**— Craigslist creator Craig Newmark**

And despite the millions of dollars that could be made, Craigslist eponymous founder Craig Newmark says the company is not planning for the once-worshipped IPO or to incorporate ads into the site.

According to Newmark, “In late 1997, I was offered the opportunity to run banner ads, but banner ads are often stupid. We’re all tired of excessive advertising, especially advertising for things that aren’t especially good for us.”

In addition to not running ads, Craigslist itself does not advertise, relying instead on word of mouth. This method is good enough to make Craigslist the place in San Francisco for anyone looking for any or all of life’s big three: a job, a place to sleep, and someone to sleep with.

While Craigslist is most successful in the Bay Area, averaging 180 million page views per month, Craigslist also runs sites dedicated to 17 other North American cities, including Miami, New York, Austin, Portland, and Vancouver, B.C. The other sites combine for about 45 million page views, with New York

accounting for about 25 million of that number.

The concept is brilliantly simple. Need to fill a room in your house, sell your old bike or car, find the cutie you made eye contact with in a local cafe, invite people to your art opening, buy a futon, or get rid of an old stove? Ask almost anyone in the Bay area where to turn and the inevitable reply will be, “Have you tried Craigslist?”

You can do all that at Craigslist, without paying a fee, without knowing anything about html, without being computer savvy, and without having any more access to a computer than you can get for free at the library.

On the Bay Area Craigslist one Tuesday in October, one could find over 80 used bikes for sale, about 60 woman-seeking-men postings, 197 rooms for rent in San Francisco, over 40 admin-jobs, 29 dressers, a free hot tub, a carpenter who works in the nude for \$45 an hour, a male beginner salsa partner, and a person willing to trade two airline tickets to the Caribbean for a digital camera.

Even the job-listing fee is a bargain for companies looking for applicants. According to Newmark, companies have suggested the site charge more. Sites outside the Bay Area currently do not charge for any listings.

By serving as a clearinghouse for information, Craigslist has also challenged some parasitic businesses, particularly those in the rental market. San Francisco-based Roommate Referral, which capitalized on the Bay Area’s notoriously tight rental market by charging \$45 for its apartment listings, closed its office in San Francisco. And now, rental brokers in New York City, who typically charge a month’s rent for their services, are finding that no-fee apartment listings on Craigslist are cutting into their business.

Newmark says Craigslist began when he was working at Charles Schwab and started emailing event announcements to friends in 1995. “People asked to add job openings to the list. And that’s become our model,” Newmark said. “People ask for more, we do something, we ask for feedback, and then we do more and then ask for more feedback.”

*continued on the next page*

And what about Zimbabwe, isolated Zimbabwe with its dictatorial leader and its burning anti-colonial rhetoric?

A representative from US AID addressed the problem. He said, "*Beggars can't be choosers.*"

Finally lonely Zimbabwe held up the begging bowl and said yes, we too want the food aid.

But there is one condition, they said. We will only accept genetically engineered grain if it is milled.

Crushed.

Ground into meal.

They sent a message loud and clear to the gift horse full of food aid ready to set sail for the port of Beira, just south and east of here. To Monsanto and Cargill and Archer Daniels Midland, and to the U.S. Department of Agriculture who pays these companies to develop new varieties, and to the U.S. Agency for International Development who helps these companies to open new markets, an embattled and poor country in the midst of African famine said, "We will accept your corn. But we do not want corn seed, thank you very much. We want grits."

★★★

Central to the issue of Genetically Modified Food is the question of choice. Vandana Shiva, noted environmentalist has said "Genetically engineered foods have become the site for testing democracy and truth." And the question of choice is — or should be — central to the issue of adopting any new technology. Biotechnology is only the latest in an onslaught of industry-driven technologies whose untimely release and subsequent misuse have damaged the cultural landscape and the biosphere possibly beyond repair.

When nuclear energy began to be promoted in the sixties, the hope was that, by the time there was a significant build-up of waste,

scientists would have discovered how to store and dispose of it. It hasn't happened. And the public was never given a choice, or a chance to reasonably oppose the technology.

When agribusiness, together with governments, promoted Green Revolution technologies like organochlorine pesticides and massive irrigation schemes to "Feed the World" back in the fifties, crop yields went up. For awhile. Then it was discovered, too late, that toxic pesticides persist in the environment and move up the food chain to poison literally every living being on earth. And that industrial scale monocropping destroys biodiversity, salinates the soil, and undermines local food security. Peasant farmers never had a choice, or a chance to peacefully resist.

Now the same companies that brought us the devastation associated with DDT, Agent Orange, and other rogue technologies bring us terminator seeds and Round-Up Ready Soy, and expect them to be adopted without question. And the U.S. Government, backed by the U.N. World Food Program, offers these technologies as "food aid" to the same countries that have been brought again and again to the point of starvation by policies imposed from the North.

The acceptance of genetically modified food aid by unwilling governments like Malawi and Mozambique exemplifies the desperation of the situation, even as people in power in these countries want to resist. *Beggars can't be choosers.* Zambia's refusal shows that, for some, the high price of self-reliance in the long-term may be worth the suffering today. And Zimbabwe's stand to accept ground meal that will feed its people without compromising its seed stock has shown that, when squeezed between a hard rock and fast-flowing river, there may be other options besides diving in head first.

At the very least, when you step into a fast-moving rocky river, it is wise to watch exactly where you step. ★

*continued from previous page*

In 1999, as Craigslist's popularity began to steamroll, Newmark stopped relying only on volunteers and dedicated himself full-time to the site, which continues to grow in popularity and has 14 employees, including CEO Jim Buckmaster.

The site has become so popular that many categories have been split into two or more boards. The San Francisco site now has separate listing categories for artists, musicians, pets, casual encounters, missed connections, tickets, garage sales, furniture, bikes, motorcycles, sublets, apartments for rent, apartments wanted, real estate for sale, biotech jobs, software jobs, and internet jobs. The discussion section includes boards for local politics, world politics, parenting, queer issues, travel, and writing.

Of course, in creating a commons, Craigslist has attracted people who abuse the site. Such abuse takes many forms, from the simple off-topic posting of a football ticket for sale in the carpool/rideshare section to commercial spammers who attempt to harvest emails from postings across the site.

While Newmark does handle user complaints and sometimes bans people based on IP addresses, he also says, "We spend a lot of time finding ways to get the community to deal with the problematic stuff."

Using drop down boxes visible on every posting, users can flag posts that are abusive, miscategorized, pornographic, or posted by spammers or scalpers. Once complaints reach a certain threshold, the post is removed, though the sentence can be repealed via an appeal to the Craigslist staff for individual review.

People can also flag posts for being particularly witty or creative, and these end up in their own section called "best-of-Craigslist." Some of these titles include "Will let you kick my ass for World Series Tickets" and "Horny futon mattress desperate for some hot action — \$100."

By default, the simple posting interface tacks on a sentence to every posting explicitly banning commercial solicitation. Starting in July 2000, Craigslist also offered posters the option of "anonymizing" their reply-to email address, to preserve privacy. If this option is selected, responses are sent to a temporary address like anon-6349996@craigslist.org, which is then routed to the poster's real email account.

The principles driving Craigslist do not stop at the rejection of venture capital and pop-under ads. Besides offering a daily listing of volunteer opportunities, Craigslist also hosts online wish-lists for non-profits and schools. For example, clicking on an arts-based first

grade class's wish list lets you purchase, through a locally-owned hardware store's web site, a selection of school supplies, from a watering can to a toy slinky, which are then shipped to the school.

Additionally, Craigslist has set up the Craigslist Foundation, which pairs "Small, grassroots nonprofits involved in local social change work" with donors and foundations. The foundation also works with the non-profits to fine-tune their presentations to potential funding sources.

When asked how Craigslist expects to translate its Bay Area success into other cities without advertising, Newmark points to the example of New York City, where traffic is growing at 20 percent a month. According to Newmark, the non-Bay Area sites are small but consistently growing, and the pace doesn't worry him at all, "We're patient and we're committed."

Newmark's goals for Craigslist are characteristically both modest and utopian: "I hope that people will connect and someone will change the world. I don't think we [Craigslist] are going to save the world. Someone else is going to do that. We just intend to provide the platform." ★

**Justin Adams**  
*Desert Road*  
 World Village, 2002  
[www.worldvillagemusic.com](http://www.worldvillagemusic.com)



I put Justin Adams's new CD *Desert Rose* into the CD player and sit back. Suddenly, my room fades away and I am in a desert land, relaxing on a resplendent boat floating lazily down a river. It is the Nile, 3000 years ago, and I am an Egyptian queen...

*Desert Rose* is a blend of desert sounds and psychedelic electronica fused with blues tendencies. All of these sounds are a mix of Adams' past; he grew up living in Jordan, Lebanon and Egypt as the son of a British ambassador. In his music he introduces his listeners to the ngoni, a three-stringed African lute that has been around for over 4000 years and was played by young girls in ancient Egypt. *Desert Rose* carries these deep African and Middle Eastern sounds, but is modernized through Adams' mixing of these sounds with electronica. The result is a masterpiece which makes the listener want to belly dance, or take mind-altering drugs, or maybe even both.

Although this is Adams' first solo venture, he has been playing professionally for 20 years, with artists including Sinead O'Connor, Peter Gabriel, the Indigo Girls, and Robert Plant. He has also produced for Lo'Jo and plays guitar for Tinariwen, both of whom can also be found on World Village.

-Jessica Haile

**Against Me!**  
*Crime CD*  
 Plan-It-X Records, 2000  
[www.plan-it-x.com](http://www.plan-it-x.com)



Although this record is a few years old, it only recently came across my desk. Now, I really like this record. Sure, I like it because it's the perfect blend of Leatherface and Inquisition (from Richmond VA), because the music is not overbearing and can be subtle while still being energetic and passionate. This is not a full on rock band, but simple guitars and drums and a screaming guy. I also read a recent issue of *Heart Attack* where Travis Fristoe calls them a mix of Billy Bragg, Naked Raygun, and the Clash, if that gives you a better idea of where Against Me! is coming from.

Most of the bands that I love, I love and enjoy and respect them because of their passion, energy, and intent. Strike Anywhere, Randy, Fifteen — all bands that fall under the "punk" umbrella, who have semi-political lyrics and most of all have passion for what they are doing, who advance a world-view which is all about leading a life of compassion and purpose and vision. Anyway, my favorite song on this 6-song EP is a perfect illustration of this. The title is "What We Worked For," and some of the lyrics go: "May the likes of this song never make one fucking dollar, leave it for a demo tape to be played until it's broken then remembered only for what it was... that we gave 'em hell." I don't want to quote the whole song, but later on, the words are: "There's a height beyond skyscrapers, there's a distance beyond the freeway, more than pictures in a magazine, more than tragedy in a rock and roll song. It's more than the actions you know it's safe to make, it's more than money could ever buy." Yeah, you should just hear it for your self. Buy a copy for yourself! Also they have a new record, *Reinventing Axl Rose* on No Idea Records that I promptly sent away for after hearing this EP.

-Jen Angel

**Bad Astronaut**  
*Houston: We Have A Drinking Problem*  
 Honest Don's, 2002  
[www.honestdons.com](http://www.honestdons.com)



Since the release of its first album, *Acrophobe*, Santa Barbara-based Bad Astronaut has grown from a trio to a seven-piece band. With the addition of members and instruments, the band has matured from simply a power-pop punk band to a driving experimental rock band that might actually make it out of this world one day.

Bad Astronaut comes with some serious punker pedigrees. Singer Joey Cape has sung for Lagwagon, and played with Me First and the Gimme Gimmes. Drummer Derrick Plourde was also in Lagwagon, as well as the Ataris.

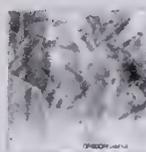
On *Houston: We Have A Drinking Problem*, Bad Astronaut takes the rock motif and turns it on its ear. The album is full of shredding guitar riffs and a driving backbeat, but it is also full of samples, dripping piano melodies, and studio tricks. Sure, it's being done by many groups these days, with varying degrees of success. One of the most endearing aspects of Bad Astronaut is that they can throw in the high-handed atmosphere tactics and still come away sounding innocent and unpretentious.

The album's opening track, "These Days" starts out with simple guitar and drums with piano. But after the first verse, the depth of the album becomes clear with a simple stuttering drum machine fill. By the end of the song, you've heard a spiraling synthesizer, radio buzz, and (of all things) orchestral strings!

While *Houston: We Have A Drinking Problem* is certainly not a theme album, it does a good job of keeping a cohesive feeling throughout. These are songs of loss and alienation. One of the best songs on the album is "The Passenger," which serves as the album's closer. This swirling space rock anthem about coming back to earth clearly puts into perspective the trip this album takes you on.

-Danielle Furfaro

**Gregor Samsa**  
 s/t  
 Iodine Recordings  
[www.iodinerecordings.com](http://www.iodinerecordings.com)



I don't know what's in the water in Richmond, Virginia, but I wanna get me some. The boys & girl of Gregor Samsa were raised on cocktails of liquid valium & low-intensity, high-quality hallucinogens. Ecstasy with room for despair. "You're beautiful in ways you'll never know / & in ways you'll never show the likes of me." Their self-titled EP on Iodine Recordings — who will also release their first LP — is a 20-minute dream with a really good sound engineer. Think Godspeed You Black Emperor on a much less epic scale. Think Labradford with stronger interest in traditional song structure. Think old-school bands like Opal or Dream Syndicate at their most languorous.

Mostly, think of your dreams. "Raise your arms to the sky / Now close your eyes & say your prayers." Dreams of wandering. Dreams of floating desire & endless, hopeless pursuit. "You are the green grass just over the fence." On this side of the fence there's fog. It's in your head: rolling, swirling sound-clouds. Quiet voices surround you & then sink unintelligibly beneath cymbalic shimmer & soft washes of guitar.

Like Godspeed, Gregor Samsa's songs have a clear forward momentum, but they don't build to crescendo. When the drums kick in, the songs shift like a dream: one second you're in the middle of a sunlit meadow, then you're running (real slow) through a dark forest, unsure exactly how you got there.

Balance between clarity & murk means someone knows what they're doing in the studio. Early on, Champ Bennett's sharp intakes of breath become instruments unto themselves. I'm not sure if they're sampled, pumped & pasted, or the result of a deft hand on the mixer every time the boy sucks oxygen. Throughout there's a graceful, almost invisible manipulation of sounds, instrumental & equipmental. Unassuming buzzes, subtle harmonics, reverb, doctored vocals, not-quite-moments of not-quite-feedback.

Next time you watch the evening news, give your ulcer a break. Turn down the sound & turn up Gregor. It's cheaper than drugs, better for your brain cells & doesn't fuck with your capacity for righteous rage tomorrow.

-Charles Weigl

**Mustard Plug**  
*Yellow #5*  
 Hopeless Records, 2002  
[www.hopelessrecords.com](http://www.hopelessrecords.com)



Not since the early days of the Mighty Mighty Bosstones has the punk/ska movement sounded so alive. Ann Arbor, Mich.-based Mustard Plug have spent the past 11 years playing some of the most driving, frenetic music on the scene. The band's latest effort, *Yellow #5*, is a raucous skank-a-thon of horn-heavy melodies and fuzzed-out guitar licks. The album sticks pretty close to convention, eschewing studio trickery or unusual instrumentation in favor of a proven ska formula. This sometimes makes the album sound a little dated, but it is sure packed with energy. Turn on CD, foot tapping and eventually flailing ensues. Some of the songs have a little added extra, such as the almost Mariachi-sounding opening of "No One But Myself" or the heavy metal intro to "Your Secret." But all of these songs return to the same knockout beat and killer horns. I can't wait to see these guys live!

-Danielle Furfaro

**Rachel Sage**  
*Illusion's Carnival*  
 Mpress Records, 2002  
[www.mpressrecords.com](http://www.mpressrecords.com)



These days with the overall refurbished sound of singer/songwriters popping out tunes in a cookie-cutter fashion, Rachel Sage's fourth offering, *Illusion's Carnival*, is a refreshing departure from the tried and true. With an eye for vivid imagery and an ear for catchy melodies, Sage penned all fifteen tracks — a collection of literate lyrics dressed in warm, rich instrumental intricacy. Even though her melodic piano is the driving force behind the album, bringing a welcome fluidity that adds nuance and texture to her deftly crafted composition, the numerous instruments used are as varied as the musical styles. From the upbeat, rock rhythm of "Maybe It's the Way," to the jazzy feel of "Trouble" and the bluesy vibe of "Marmelade," the assorted approach delightfully provides a seamless effect, showcasing the depth of Sage's songwriting ability. Her dramatic ballads even fit nicely into this eclectic mix, including the standouts,

"Unbeauty," and "Linger," which is what you don't want to do when deciding whether to give this album a listen.

-Tiffany Curtis

## Sewing Terrorists

s/t  
s4s3s3@yahoo.com  
1232 Sherman SE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49506



Within the small, artist-friendly Eastown neighborhood, practically shouting distance from downtown and exclusive suburbs, reside The Sewing Terrorists, a three-piece, all-woman rock band.

In their self-titled debut, the band, comprised of Christy, Jennifer, and Sarah, bring revolution to a town screaming for relief with a warm yet subversive approach, a alternative to anarchists confronting riot police on tear gas-filled streets. Dispensing with the stereotyped thrash of punk, these Terrorists defy the accepted logic of ripping the system with punk fashion and male-dominated punk shows in favor of understated beats and vocals. And the record was recorded in a basement with the CD jacket and the liner notes hand-sewn.

The Sewing Terrorists cover a ton of ground on difficult issues, ranging from sexual assault ("Angelina") and de-humanized migrant labor ("Pledge of Allegiance") to conservative hate-politics ("Clean Republic") and the beauty myth ("Body, Baby"). With the sewing motifs of "Advice on Sound" and "Front Pocket," the Sewing Terrorists calmly and ingeniously compel us to repair and undo the rotting social fabric as if sitting on the porch, needle and thread in hand, with foresight and respect. In my favorite, "The Day My Ass Expanded and Ate Grand Rapids," they take us on a tour of G.R., demolishing De Vos Hall and Van Andel Arena and bringing the critical mass movement to the giant S curve on U.S. 131. The record ends on "Be the Bomb You Throw," with the Terrorists asking, "Am I here to wilt like a rose in the basement?" echoing the start-up days of The Ramones.

—Matthew L.M. Fletcher

## This Machine Kills/

JR Ewing

s/t split  
Dim Mak, 2002  
www.dimmak.com



This Machine Kills from Goleta, California and JR Ewing from Norway come together to offer 2 songs each in departures from their hardcore sounds, expanding their boundaries both socially and musically.

This Machine Kills offer up a strong hardcore song about the evils of male privilege on "Take Back The Night" and one no-wave electronic number "Booby Traps" featuring vocals by Alisha Westerman which comes off sounding like a throwaway b-side when compared to the power of their first song.

The real reason to get your hands on this cd is for JR Ewing. They offer up sheer unadulterated Telecaster-driven rock power with tonsil-tearing vocals. Their sound is Refused-influenced rock-n-roll that is naked, raw and explosive. From the bending guitar riff on "Panic," JR Ewing inspires much air-guitar and air-drum playing through the course of their two songs. Also the addition of a nontraditional hardcore instrument like the piano on "Holiday Narcotic" provides another layer to the group's sound.

The fact that both of these bands attempt to stretch the boundaries of hardcore is certainly laudable. Three out of four of tracks succeed in that department. I can only hope that they continue to move in this direction.

-Jason Ziemniak

## John Trudell

*Bone Days*  
Daemon Records/2001  
www.daemonrecords.com



John Trudell is back with his timely release *Bone Days*. Mixing spoken word with traditional Native music from his band Bad Dog, Trudell lives the words he speaks. The words in *Bone Days* reveal the wounds of history repeating itself. Together with guitarist Billy Watts and Native chants by Quiltman the album is a music and word dichotomy that unveils an intense tapestry of human life, love and loss.

In "Carry the Stone" Trudell unveils the roots of a tainted society and how we are not so different from the failings of past civilizations. Trudell writes, "The more evil the empire, the more paranoid the society." His lessons in these songs are words spoken from elders past used to admonish the young ones into respecting their ancestor's ways. Along the road, Trudell's eyes opened to see the force of words.

The lyrics, with music to set the pace, bring you deeper into Trudell's world. The title track from *Bone Days* is a contemporary message using elements of nature to get to the core of our fleeting days. As stated in these poignantly written lines, "Covering the night, In the tears of the stars, And the way memories run, Every ending has just begun."

The final track "Hanging from The Cross" is definitely a lesson you will not hear in any university or pulpit. Trudell's conviction and ability make use of poetry to re-set the course that was set many years ago with the lines, "In the name of their savior, Forcing on us, The trinity of the chain, Guilt sin and blame. We weren't lost and we didn't need any book."

If the duty of music is to reflect society defects, wrongs and responsibilities then John Trudell gives us the truth. He has made the mirror for us to look into, given us the responsibility of thought, and made us accountable.

-Paul Mascarenas

## Various Artists

NE VS NC  
The Redemption Recording Co.,  
2002  
www.redemption.net



Indie rock bands from Nebraska and North Carolina are pitted against each other in a sonic face-off on this two disc set in Redemption Recording Co.'s ongoing "State Vs. State" compilation series.

Highlights from the Nebraska disk include the emo-rock of Cursive and Her Flyaway Manner, the jazzy folk of Neva Dinova, the moody instrumental rock of The Sound of Rails and the hardcore assault of unfortunately named H2NCH2CH2CH2CH2NH2 (Putrescine).

Standout tracks from the North Carolina disk include Erie Choir's mellow ballad "Where I Want to Go," the math rock instrumental of Fin Fang Foom, and Sorry About Dresden's Pavement-esque song "Some Precision."

In my opinion, the state which comes out victorious

is Nebraska due to the inclusion of the track "First Class" by the Carsinogents, whose farfisa-driven surf/garage sound is a breath of fresh air on the compilation which is mostly dominated by indie and emo-sounding bands.

The only thing that this CD suffers from is the sheer length of it, clocking in at over two hours, and as with most compilations there are hits as well as misses but albums like these serve as good documents of what is presently going on in each of the states by a tremendous number of talented bands.

-Jason Ziemniak

## SPOTLIGHT: LADYTRON & THIEVERY CORPORATION

### Ladytron

*Light&Magic*  
Emperor Norton, 2002  
www.emperornorton.com



### Thievery Corporation

*The Richest Man in Babylon*  
ESL Music, 2002  
www.eslmusic.com



A lot of people have spent a lot of time trying to convince me that techno is a sign of the impending apocalypse. I'm sympathetic to their arguments; and for those people, who comprise the majority of my friends, family, and household, I keep my habit covert and joke repeatedly about my dopey addiction to repetitive, headache-inducing garbage. Sometimes I'll sneak in a little arty drum and bass when they're not paying attention, just to prove my point that it isn't ALL bad. The newest full-length album from Ladytron is an excellent piece of evidence for my point. Maybe you're the kind of girl who thinks that wispy robot vocals and eighties-revival synthesizer over beats big enough to blow out your speakers is the kind of crap they spin in hell. But if the chief regret of your short life is being barely out of diapers when Depeche Mode hit their prime, if as a toddler you were convinced that your six-rhythm (samba! beguine!) Casio would catapult you to fame and glory, if you look back nostalgically on your formative years gobbling Ecstasy and twitching next to speakers twice your size, if you wait until your emo roommates aren't home so you can crank up cheeseball house and flail around the kitchen, then *Light&Magic* II get your butt shaking loud and proud. The truly indie faint of heart can stay home while you throw a dance party to end all dance parties. Even if it's just you. When you're too tired to move you can flop down to *The Richest Man in Babylon* for the Thievery Corporation's patented dreamy downtempo. You'll have to forgive them, though, for jumping the techno bandwagon and plugging in that fully appropriated generic Middle-Eastern sitar-and-wailing gimmick (I mean, come on, even Madonna beat them to it). Though Thievery Corporation never seems to do anything new, they do the same thing well; nice music to fall asleep to that will give you pretty dreams.

-Sarah Marie

photo by megan holmes

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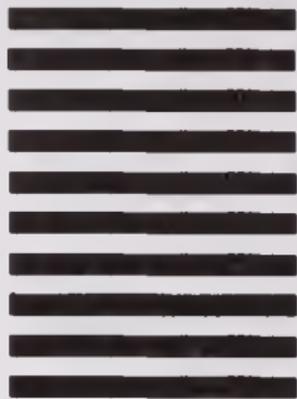
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## VOICES OF REASON FROM WITHIN AN INSANE NATION...



JELLO BIAFRA MACHINE GUN IN THE CLOWN'S HAND

At last, the full no-holds-barred Spoken Word Album #7, explaining how the war on terrorism went terribly wrong and detailing what we can do about it. Jello expands on his April 2002 release, "The Big Ka-Boom, Part One," with more in-depth details, plus an eye-brow raising recap of the Florida election fraud follies. A scaring reply to anyone who still thinks Mader cost Gore the election. VIRUS 290 3xLP: \$14.00 / 3xCD: \$18.00

MOB ACTION AGAINST THE STATE

An international event, the Bay Area Anarchist Book Fair consistently draws insightful, dynamic speakers who further our understanding of the capitalist, hierarchical stranglehold and inspire us to do battle against it. A "best of" compilation of speakers over the years, including Paul Krassner, Jello Biafra, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Craig D'Wara, Christian Parenti, Ruthie Gilmore, Roxanne Dunbar Ortiz and more. VIRUS 285 2xCD: \$13.00



HOWARD ZINN ARTISTS IN A TIME OF WAR

Noted radical historian Howard Zinn provides an alternate perspective on war focusing on writers and artists such as Mark Twain and Langston Hughes. While blind patriotism dominates post 9/11 America, Zinn gently reminds us that pride in one's country comes not from the words and deeds of government, but from the actions of working people. VIRUS 292 CD: \$12.00

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DARRYL CHERNEY & THE CHERNOBLES

BUSH IT! b/w SEND GEORGE BUSH A PRETZEL

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# THIRD WORLD

Third World Majority. Think about it.

Isn't it funny how a name can reframe the entire way the non-profit industrial complex defines the majority of people locked out from most of the world's resources? Are we your under-resourced and marginalized minority constituents, welfare mothers, juvenile delinquents, terrorists, maids, sex workers, drug addicts, illegal aliens, and sweatshop workers? Or are we our own visionaries, singers, poets, architects, filmmakers, organizers, scholars, and historians?

As the women of Third World Majority (TWM), we struggle with our vision and the definitions that can limit or free us. Within TWM, we are a collective of young women of color building a new media center. We partner with communities of color and indigenous communities to provide multimedia trainings and to develop strategies for how we can reclaim technology resources for our self-determination. We focus on the digital storytelling movement, in which communities create their own stories from the found material in their lives (art, oral history, creative writing, photographs, music, written script, letters, news clippings) and combine it with new media production (digital video, the Web, graphic design, sound engineering, animation) to tell their own truths in their own voices. In a lot of ways the work we do isn't just about telling stories, it's about reclaiming our histories.

## **From Museums to Ray Guns, Good Old Boys to Sweatshops: Where do we Fit in?**

When we started TWM we had very few answers and many questions: Why do we feel uncomfortable around technology? Why is the culture of training and learning technology so inaccessible? Why are media labs, tech centers, and public access stations so often empty and not used by communities of color? Why are all the techies we know white alpha males with no social skills? And why is the damn media democracy movement so white? While these were some heavy questions, the first big step for our work with technology began by understanding its military and colonial legacy, the boy culture that supports this legacy, and the physical workforce who creates these technologies.

Whether it is the internet or the camera, all of the technologies that we work with have particular legacies of colonialism and military and police intervention. For example, the Internet, the original ARPANET, was a direct result of a scientific and military collaboration to develop a communications system for times of military crisis when it debuted in the 1970s. While part of this was related to Cold War concerns, it was also occurring in the backdrop of counter-intelligence and repression within many of the communities of color in the U.S. Film and video are good examples of the role mainstream media and news play in dividing our communities. We are criminals, crack whores, strippers, comic relief, terrorists, and other negative stereotypes that promote a deep powerlessness. Cultural critic Coco Fusco places these media representations — part of our ongoing betrayal by the camera in ethnography and anthropology — as the first line of colonial engagement with our peoples. This trauma is remembered by our peoples, even as it is reinforced today by the fact

***Think about who truly makes up the majority of the peoples in the world and what power we would wield if we were a unified force.***

by **Thenmozhi Soundararajan**

# MAJORITY

that almost every part of our lives is now under surveillance with video cameras.

We need to think about computers not as an inevitable product of progress, but as a specific technology embedded with the philosophy of the West's rugged individualism and colonialism. It is part of the legacy of consumerism where there is an expectation that people will use their technical devices in the privacy of their homes, alienating and separating themselves from other people. If you look at communities in the Global South, technology applications have been approached with a different perspective and the emphasis is on communal use, on ways that people share resources and maximize the productivity for the community's benefit.

This extends even to the color palettes and design motifs of the computer world. Last time I checked, Photoshop wasn't offering ghetto brick, mud walls, or third world stucco filters that I could use to represent the worlds my people live in *now*. And this reflects the lack of sensitivity the creators of software have in seeing different ways of seeing between cultures. But once again computers are a reflection of who can currently afford the machines and their particularly color- and culture-blind attitude that is particularly profound with the computer industry

This brings us to the problem of boys. When we are teaching technology, we in TWM are quite aware of the white boy cult that surrounds technology. Or more specifically, the white boy cult of technology. Our culture privileges the technical skills of boys at an early age, with so many "ins" to technology that girls are only beginning to have (think video games and Erector sets). And because of that boys, and later the alpha males of the dot com era, defined the culture and the language of technology that we have to work in. That is why so much of the language around computers is about domination

and latently sexual (like plug-and-play, slave drives, master control, etc). It's also why so many of the representations in video games are beef-cakey heroes, big-busted women, and outdated stereotypes of people of color as athletes, terrorists, pimps, and dancers. In this boy culture, so much about how learning is transferred isn't collaborative. It is about one-upmanship and competition, never about true collaboration. It is a reflection of the arrogance of male privilege, of who has the time and money to keep up with all of the cool new gadgets, latest web sites, and hot software.

It is also important to remember how toxic computer manufacturing is, and to keep in mind who builds these computers. Whether it is in the Third World or in the U.S., it is mainly women and communities of color who are vulnerable to both the repressive labor practices and the unregulated toxic exposure in the high tech sweatshops of Hewlett Packard, Intel, Apple, and Microsoft. The computer designers and engineers, who design these fancy machines, are thinking more about the bottom line than about the ongoing human cost of the industry. While computers are promoted as a wave of new green industry, they are in fact quite stained with blood.

All of that said, the reason why TWM still does the work we do relates to our attitude about literacy and its relationship to liberation. Clearly, the way technology is set up now is fucked-up for our people and communities. However, the current evolution of the culture of personal computing will be with us for the next 50 to 60 years. This makes it a critical time for all of us to hack the hardware and the culture of this system and move the trajectory of our communities from compliant consumers to cultural and technical activists in every form of the media.

But what would this look like?



## Rebuilding the Matriarchy: A TWM Methodology

We recognized first and foremost that since media spaces were places associated with past and current drama that we could not build a physical lab for people to enter. Creating a technology space and then expecting that to become a “community center” is a ridiculous concept. There is nothing inherently built into a computer that engenders community building (in fact it is exactly the opposite). So with our first seed grant we bought a seven-station portable laptop lab. With the laptops we could train in the spaces where communities already feel at home. We taught around the country in barns, churches, community centers, schools, and people’s homes. With the technology portable and actually rather small, folks were able to focus on the cultural products they were translating and reshaping into a digital medium rather stress about the technology itself. It also prioritized for us the primacy of the community and the use of technology as tool and just a tool.

The other aspect of our teaching process that we needed to tackle was how to unpack the assumptions around the white boy’s club of technology. As young women of color who had been early adopters of web and video technologies for our community movements, we had all faced being shut out of labs, being condescended to by other techies, and learning the tools on curriculum that were at best irrelevant and, at worst horribly offensive. We also realized that as working class young women of color in a racist, sexist, classist society, our leadership and vision for our communities is continually silenced (inside and outside of lab spaces).

So we began to rebuild the matriarchy. We prioritized the leadership of young women of color as our trainers, as our organizers, and as tech support. When folks come to one of our trainings, one of the standard lines we hear is “Wow, I never have seen so many young women, let alone young women of color, know what they are doing around so many computers!” Yeah I say, and we even know how to program our own VCRs! It’s funny how so simple a shift of who is teaching is not a simple thing at all. Because while it literally changes the face of who is training, the relationships built within this context are also different. And while this is not to repeat stereotypes, as an organization we are working towards modeling collective, intentional, nurturing models of leadership that move beyond gender binaries.

Finally I think as young women, we assert and recognize the leadership women have had for a long time in our communities that, from mother to daughter, nurtures the passing on of our stories, culture, and traditions. This is an extremely important role young women continue to play, and we believe it is vital to recontextualize our work as not only technology training but also spaces of our cultural resistance.

Another value we practice at TWM is co-teaching with a community teacher curriculum that comes from the community we are working with. There are two parts to why we follow this concept. First, technology curriculum at schools and educational institutions has caused an incredible trauma within our communities because the textbooks, the software, and the hardware are not built with the history and cultural context of our communities in mind. When you are setting up a training environment, you have to be really deliberate about what images, sounds, and effects are presented, because people are already expecting to be shut down. So, it is really important to have curriculum that comes from our communities’ perspectives, that speaks to our

own ideas, and the value systems that are embedded in the way we tell stories. Secondly because technical skill is privileged over other kinds of knowledge, we want to challenge folks and their understanding of what an expert could be. No matter what kind of training we offer, we always try to have a community teacher present, whose community wisdom is given equal weight to the “technical” knowledge of the other trainers present.

## Media Justice: A Media for the People

Once we had our lab and our teaching methodology straight, our focus was to then figure out how to build meaningful participation from communities of color and indigenous communities within the realm of the media democracy movement. Lots of different folks define the work of the media democracy movement as so many different things, but at TWM we define the media democracy movement to include folks who are working on media accountability and policy, cultural workers and trainers of media production (film, video, radio, etc), media literacy, alternative journalism and virtual/real world technology organizing.

Every organization working on social justice issues realizes that the media is a huge part of the problem in our communities and recently there have been several disappointing “media convergence” events. Many of the traditional media organizing institutions have convened these strategy sessions and, surprise surprise, they have consistently not been strategic about what it would take to involve just a few people of color in panels and leadership circles. They have neglected to think about how to fundamentally change up the structure and language of discourse within each of these gatherings, so that *our* communities, who are directly affected, can own the movement and the vision behind this work.

Short of a revolution and a massive re-distribution of wealth, one of the events we are organizing with a collective of other media organizations and organizers of color is a Media Justice gathering and teaching session in Selma, Alabama late next year. Similar to Environmental Justice Movement, we felt that communities of color and indigenous communities needed to stake out a different space within and apart from the larger media democracy movement. We wanted to really be able to address the difference of focus and approach to our media organizing based on applying a rigorous race, class, and gender analysis to these issues. A gathering in Selma would frame our meeting in the context of one of the more visible movements for self-determination within this country and give a historicity and the needed political weight to draw community



organizations into a dialogue around media issues. In this historic gathering we will educate each other on our issues, develop a core set of accessible principles around the Media Justice work, and invite both networks and base building community organizations to participate and widen the circle of those familiar and connected to media organizing.

It’s ambitious, I know, but as group of headstrong young women, we were never ones to limit the vision of the world our communities wanted by the pesky reality of systemic oppression. In some ways, our gift has been the stubbornness to build institutions that don’t reflect the system we are trying to break down but create the world and relationship we want *now*. I say that in a way that is harsh but sincere because I believe that if we can keep our values close, our imaginations open, and our stories fierce, We can and will win. ★



# HELL ON EARTH CARANDIRU

## Where Human Rights Were Forgotten

by Martin La Battaglia  
photos Malu Lopes

Brazil's Carandiru or "Casa de Detenção," once the biggest carcerary complex in South America, was designed 40 years ago by Jânio Quadros, former Governor of São Paulo. It is located in Avenida Cruzeiro do Sul 2630, just 10 minutes from São Paulo's downtown by subway. This "House of Detention," as is written on its front gates, can be seen as a house for a lot of things, but not as a correctional system. A poll carried out by students from University of São Paulo points out that in São Paulo State, 56 percent of former prisoners go back to jail after a 16-month period.

Water infestations, dangerous lighting, rats, and dirt were common elements in the day-to-day life of inmates. The yellowed walls and cells, with their pictures of naked women, cars, and motorcycles used to fill the place with prisoner's desires and dreams of the future.

"Used to" because Carandiru was completely inactivated in September 2002. According to São Paulo's present Governor, Geraldo Alckmin — who is trying to get reelected this year for second term against José Genoíno of the Worker's Party — the physical structure was jeopardized, because "no incarceration system in the world contains more than 7,000 prisoners."

In its inauguration, on September 11, 1956, Carandiru was destined for civilians awaiting their trials, rather than for the detention of convicted prisoners. It had a capacity of 3,500, yet it became a prison, in which during its worst years more than 11,000 prisoners were locked up inside seven wards. One of the biggest mysteries of Carandiru is that so few guards were employed at the prison — Amnesty International says that there were 100 guards for 7,000 inmates. The prison had eight wards total, but the actual number assignment goes up to nine. (Ward One is for internal administration and Ward Three does not exist.)

Carandiru was open to public access until October 21, 2002. Wards Six, Eight, and Nine were demolished on October 24 and will be transformed into a park or a multi-sports (soccer, skate, cooper, and bicycle) area. The other buildings, Wards Two, Four, Five, and Seven will be transformed into a cultural/pro-youth institution in connection with state jurisdiction. The government's intentions for the Carandiru are not popular. Some people want a University instead and many others would like it if Carandiru was transformed into a museum of crimes against Human Rights.



Every one of the nine pavilions had its characteristic features. For example:

**Ward 2 - Services.** Prisoners worked in Carandiru cooking, cleaning, helping with convicted fellows documents, etc. For every three days of working, the prisoner received one day off their total sentence. This practice was used in all pavilions, but Ward Two was known for it, as mostly prisoners-workers were kept here. As Carandiru's monitors say, "It was the lightest pavilion."

**Ward 4 - Wounded.** Where injured and terminally ill prisoners were allocated since their physical contacts with other convicted fellows might cause a general epidemic, or inspire fights/death or threats/blackmail practices in retaliation for bad conditions.

**Ward 5 - Security.** This was known popularly as "Amarelão" or "Big Yellow One" because of its color. Ward Five was destined for prisoners considered "dead" in other pavilions and housed rapists and assassins who wouldn't last long in contact with the other prisoners because of their criminal past. "Amarelão" was considered a refugee shelter inside prison walls.

**Ward 8 - Repeat offenders.** For those who were released but came back to prison after committing yet another crime. Inmates allocated to Ward Eight were known as wise men as they were familiar with the "Prisoners Code," laws made by prisoners. Violation of this code meant death sentences for the violator or at least a huge fight, and could instigate the convicted transgressor's transference to Ward Five.

**Ward 9 - First Time Offenders.** Considered by prison authorities as the most dangerous, as prisoners here were not used to a "locked up way of life." Wards Nine and Five were always the most populous, the first having in its worst year with 2,000 prisoners inside. Pavilion Nine was the crime scene for the 1992 massacre, when 111 prisoners were killed by Military Police and special forces/riot troops of São Paulo's Government.

### The Massacre

On October 2, 1992 a soccer match between prisoner teams (Furacão 2000 versus Burgo Paulista) took place and a fight occurred after the game. What started with two prisoners suddenly became a bloodbath. As guards were unable to stop it, the Ninth Ward gates were locked down and authorities were called to interfere. One phone call made by Public Safety Secretary Pedro Franco Campos to São Paulo's

Governor (at that time) Luis Antônio Fleury Filho, put a life-or-death decision in the hands of Military Police (PM). By 15:30 p.m., riot troops, elite forces, and Military Police were parked in front of Carandiru's front gates.

Casa de Detenção's Director, Dr. Ismael Pedrosa, claimed he tried to argue. Human Rights organizations such as COAJCC (a committee responsible for watching checks and balances in the Carandiru's trials) say the opposite — that no discussion took place and force was used with a false excuse: a prisoners' uprising. According to the official numbers, 341 policemen entered Ward Nine with live ammunition and other lethal weapons. Coronel Ubiratan Guimarães, head chief of the Metropolitan Police Command (CPM), took charge of all men. A report by COAJCC shows that 80 percent of the murdered prisoners were still awaiting their sentence and more than 50 percent were 25 years old or younger. The report points out that crucial evidences were hidden or destroyed within hours. A prisoner, V.P.V., said that "There were a lot of corpses which left inside trash trucks."

The result: 111 killed by police and 130 injured. Prisoners say more than 500 were killed that day and that corpses were carried to an elevator to hide them from the media.

On June 29, 2001, Colonel Ubiratan Guimarães was convicted and held responsible for the police act. He was sentenced to 632 years of prison — the biggest trial of Brazil's legal history — six years per death plus other major offenses.

However, Ubiratan is doing time in a domestic prison system (or "house arrest"). Today, he is a State Deputy elected (with 56,148 votes) in the recent October elections. Luis Antônio Fleury Filho, former Governor of São Paulo, was candidate to be Federal Deputy and won again (82,388 votes).

Policemen who participated in the massacre went to trial but none were convicted. Condemnation by international organizations, such as the Organization of American States (OAS), resulted in the diminishment of Brazil's rating number on the Human Rights Index.

During 2000, the Brazilian Government apologized for the violations of human rights and claimed responsibility in front of the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights. There Brazil committed to conditions such as taking those responsible for the massacre to trial, and apologizing to the International Community.

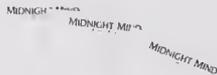
And now they want to demolish and implode Casa de Detenção?

An ex-convicted fellow, "Sergio," who was present on the day of the massacre — escaping death by carrying corpses and managing to mix his body between the dead ones — claims that the government is trying to hide the real facts from public opinion and more than 500 were killed that day.

Sergio's assertion gives one something to wonder about. Authorities are allowing visits only to Wards Two and Seven, considered "light," as fights and deaths were not that usual. Wards demanding Carandiru be transformed into a public University System. Another occurred on October 2, in remembrance of the 10 years of false justice since Carandiru's massacre, identifying how the powerful can get away with murder. Pastoral Carcerária, Tortura Nunca Mais, MSU, and other Human Rights organizations participated. On October 5, one day before the elections, a demonstration organized by the São Paulo's anarcho-punk community and Anarchist Black Cross was barred from the Carandiru's front door by guards who claimed that no one could enter because of a terrorist threat received some days before. The demonstration was also called to remember the 10-year anniversary of "Massacre do Carandiru" and to point out how powerful people do not get punished by their crimes. "We Didn't Forget," proclaimed one banner.

According to Carandiru's Press Secretary Paulo Braga, more than 100,000 prisoners passed through Casa de Detenção cells since its inauguration, 46 years ago. And now it's deactivated to form another 11 prisons throughout São Paulo's State. Some say the problem wasn't solved, it just changed its address. ★

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# 78 REASONABLE QUESTIONS

*to ask about any technology*

by Stephanie Mills

and Megan Holmes

## **Ecological**

What are its effects on the health of the planet and of the person?  
Does it preserve or destroy biodiversity?  
Does it preserve or reduce ecosystem integrity?  
What are its effects on the land?  
What are its effects on wildlife?  
How much and what kind of waste does it generate?  
Does it incorporate the principles of ecological design?  
Does it break the bond of renewal between humans and nature?  
Does it preserve or reduce cultural diversity?  
What is the totality of its effects, its "ecology"?

## **Social**

Does it serve community?  
Does it empower community members?  
How does it affect our perception of our needs?  
Is it consistent with the creation of a communal, human economy?  
What are its effects on relationships?  
Does it undermine conviviality?  
Does it undermine traditional forms of community?  
How does it affect our way of seeing and experiencing the world?  
Does it foster a diversity of forms of knowledge?  
Does it build on, or contribute to, the renewal of traditional forms of knowledge?  
Does it serve to commodify knowledge or relationships?  
To what extent does it redefine reality?  
Does it erase a sense of time and history?  
What is its potential to become addictive?

## **Moral**

What values does its use foster?  
What is gained by its use?  
What are its effects beyond its utility to the individual?  
What is lost in using it?  
What are its effects on the least person in the society?

## **Aesthetic**

Is it ugly?  
Does it cause ugliness?  
What noise does it make?  
What pace does it set?  
How does it affect quality of life (as distinct from standard of living)?

## **Practical**

What does it make?  
Who does it benefit?  
What is its purpose?  
Where was it produced?  
Where is it used?  
Where must it go when it's broken or obsolete?  
How expensive is it?  
Can it be repaired? By an ordinary person?  
What is the entirety of its cost, the full cost accounting?

## **Ethical**

How complicated is it?  
What does it allow us to ignore?  
To what extent does it distance agent from effect?  
Can we assume personal, or communal, responsibility for its effects?  
Can its effects be directly apprehended?  
What ancillary technologies does it require?  
What behavior might it make possible in the future?  
What other technologies might it make possible?  
Does it alter our sense of time and relationships in ways conducive to nihilism?

## **Vocational**

What is its impact on craft?  
Does it reduce, deaden, or enhance human creativity?  
Is it the least imposing technology available for the task?  
Does it replace, or does it aid, human hands and human beings?  
Can it be responsive to organic circumstance?  
Does it depress or enhance the quality of goods?  
Does it depress or enhance the meaning of work?

## **Political**

What is its mystique?  
Does it concentrate or equalize power?  
Does it require, or institute, a knowledge elite?  
Is it totalitarian?  
Does it require a bureaucracy for its perpetuation?  
What legal empowerments does it require?  
Does it undermine traditional moral authority?  
Does it require military defense?  
Does it enhance, or serve, military purposes?  
How does it affect warfare?  
Does it foster mass thinking or behavior??  
Is it consistent with the creation of a global economy?  
Does it empower transnational corporations?  
What kind of capital does it require?

## **Metaphysical**

What aspect of the inner self does it reflect?  
Does it express love?  
Does it express rage?  
What aspect of our past does it reflect?  
Does it reflect cyclical or linear thinking? ★

# Banana-Republic Superhighway

words Chellis Glendinning  
illustration Christine Wong



To the global mind, the information superhighway is the route to the unified world. Find it in cyberspace: get your corporate headquarters (and credit cards) there in a nanosecond. To the imperial mind, venues of virtual arrival become invitations to binary supposition, announcements of presumption devoid of sight or caring.

The story on TV is that a scraggly but excited villager in Asia is calling his ÉmigrÉ relative in the United States with a plastic phone card. The story is that children in inner-city Philadelphia are bright-eyed, bushy-tailed talking on computers to children in India. By gosh, you have a keypad pal in South Africa! The world has arrived, with all the glory of its diversity, into techno-oneness.

And we have the global information infrastructure to thank. With its lasers beaming through space microwave satellite to dish, with its glass wires running to every location, the penetration is invisible, the glimpse more consummate than the carvers of Der Rom Weg (the first map ever made) could ever have envisioned. The tract is neither carved in wood nor etched on parchment; it resides in the ethers of cyberspace.

★★★

What is superhighway. Multiplex. Virtual. Hypercapable. What is seamless web of computers, databases, communications networks, and consumer electronics that is changing the way we live. Fiber optics harboring millions of linkages over a single strand of glass.

What is. That expedites the way transnational corporations flash capital from one corner of the planet to the other. That demolishes company towns with a finger to the delete key. That uproots workers from their families, turns land-based cultures into Club Meds. That stunts all possibility of existence outside its definition of survival, gives mail-order catalogs seats at the United Nations.

Sustainability becomes not connection to wind, land, and ancestors. It becomes how well business and government maintain the conditions that perpetuate the race.

Albert Gore Sr. It is the 1950s, and the senator is the champion of the interstate superhighway. Not only will a national highway system link every place in the United States with every other place — Gore is breathless as he addresses his colleagues — it will reduce auto accidents, boost employment, and provide the country with the means for military defense. I remember. As a child, my mother and I take the rapid transit into downtown Cleveland. Or we drive straight down Euclid Avenue. As a teenager, both train and avenue suddenly become too slow. Now anyone with a map and a Chevrolet snakes along Liberty Boulevard to the interstate, shoots around the cloverleaf (past the cocked Nike missile), and swoops into downtown from behind Public Square.

Albert Gore Jr. It is the 1990s, and the vice president is the champion of the information superhighway. He espouses a network of communications technologies that will link every person in the United States, reduce auto accidents, boost employment, and aid military defense. Gore is not shouting. He is not a breathless kind of man. But the vision causes others to lose their breath. Fiber-optic cable bundle of microwaves, they are heaving, the links will go everywhere.

★★★

After forging strategic highways into Mexico, the United States government usurps well over half of that country's land base. It feigns help

to Cuba in the fight against imperialist Spain, then implants its own militarized monocrops. The nation seizes Hawaii, Puerto Rico, Guam; engineers a revolution against Colombia; constructs the state of Panama so it can build a canal. It inserts soldiers and cash registers in Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua. By midcentury many of the previously self-sufficient countries of Latin America have been turned into United States-backed "banana republics": their lands have been usurped from community-based sustainable uses, carved into privately owned estancias, and are cranking out tons of bananas and coffee for the profit of United States corporations.

"United Fruit Inc. / reserved for itself the juiciest, / the central seaboard of my land," writes Chilean poet Pablo Neruda in a poem damning foreign exploitation and revealing the complicity of local despots;

*it alienated self-destiny,  
regaled Caesar's crowns,  
unsheathed envy, drew  
the dictatorship of flies.*

"The comprador repressors . . . have raped women in the presence of family members," further details political analyst Michael Parenti,

*burned sexual organs with acid and scalding water, placed rats in women's vaginas and into the mouths of prisoners, and mutilated, punctured, and cut off various parts of victims' bodies, including genitalia, eyes, and tongues. They have injected air into women's breasts and into veins, causing slow painful death, shoved bayonets and clubs*

into the vagina or, in the case of men,  
into the anus causing rupture and death.

★★★

Banana Republic opens on Mill Valley's East Blithedale in 1978. It is your proverbial hole-in-the-wall posthippie store, and its attraction is immediate. We have already scoured the army surplus stores in Oakland for wide-legged navy pants and olive jackets, more often than not picking up scabies along with street-smart fashion. But these clothes are the musty moth-eaten stuff of America's recent wars: World War II, Korea, Vietnam. Banana Republic holds forth an array of hitherto unavailable items hailing from far more exotic locations: khaki caps with earflaps to shield the blistering Moroccan sun; linen jodhpurs donned by British lieutenants perched along the Nile; wicker suitcases, leather saddlebags. These are the emblems of the kind of romantic adventure that has been dangled before us in the films and literature of the Western world. Swashbuckling soldiers. Aviators. Gentlemen officers. Wind, sand, stars. Classic, foreign, elite.

Colonial.

We have somehow found within ourselves the sense to see through Vietnam and the moon shot. But here in the door jamb to our closets, we fall into confusion, taken in by the potency of the myths that have molded our collective consciousness. Confession: before Banana Republic, in a kind of emotional extrication from the pain of empire, I merely long. After Banana Republic, I embrace. You will never again find me stripped of a white linen shirt. A pair of jodhpurs. A World War I leather pilot's helmet.

Banana republic. Panama is a banana republic. Honduras. Nicaragua. Venezuela. But is a hole-in-the-wall in Mill Valley, California, the banana republic of the fashion world? The store proliferates, opening a second outlet on Polk Street in San Francisco. It is a bigger space, five times as big, and yet the exotic-romance theme persists. There are some mass-produced shirts and pants now, the kind of thing you might don to trek through urban streets to land a cappuccino — but there are also pith helmets and lace-up leather paddock boots and big-faced watches with khaki bands. Airplanes hang from the ceiling, and the walls of the outlet are painted like zebra hide.

"Donna?" I am calling my wild friend who lives in a top-floor apartment converted from an old schoolhouse in Brooklyn. "Donna? Is there a Banana Republic on Columbus Avenue in New York?"

"Yes. I'm sure there is. Banana Republic? Columbus Avenue? Definitely."

"Perfect."

Donna treks a respectable length of Columbus Avenue, fifty blocks, from St. John the Divine to Columbus Circle. The Banana Republic outlet is at 69th. The store is a major letdown. Primed by my stories of East Blithedale and Polk, she is hoping for pith helmets and aviator goggles.

"Chellis, there is no more army-surplus."  
"Oh."

"They have 360 outlets in Canada and the United States."

"Oh."

"They're owned by The Gap."

"Really."

"They're opening four new 30,000-square-foot retail emporiums."

"Huh."

"Chellis, they're selling the kind of clothes you'd wear to a job in a transnational corporation."

"Oh."

"Almost every item is contracted out to a foreign factory: the Philippines, Turkey, Singapore, Indonesia. I heard that what Levi did for denim, Banana Republic does for khaki. The chinos alone are made in Macao, Portugal, Hong Kong, and someplace called 'United Arab Emirates.' Word has it that they are made in sweatshops like the textile factories of the industrial revolution."

"Do they still have the photojournalist vest?"

"Yeah. It's made in Thailand."

"Oh."

"You're not disappointed?"

"Well, yes . . . I am. But let's think this through. Maybe there's symmetry here. Maybe Cristobal Colon and Teddy Roosevelt would still be proud. Dig it. British field boots are a thing of the past; *laptop wear* is de rigueur for the new colonialism . . ."

★★★

"A navigation system that's so accurate," proclaims the BMW ad, touting its onboard computer charting device, "it can position you almost anywhere on earth to within 11 feet." The Jones Live-Map Meter makes a comeback in the age of computers. "turn right!" "avoid mudhole!" Satellites orbiting at 12,000 miles above the planet transmit data pinpointing the latitude, longitude, and altitude of your location to the car's antenna. The onboard computer retrieves a map of the area from a storage disk and displays it on the dashboard screen. Your exact location appears on the map.

There are no more hostile natives on this road. No more dead buffalo bobbing through the waves. The road lays the way. It veers up, held in place by humongous steel-girded columns. It veers down, twisting back on itself

in a cement whorl like a wedding cake. Crown Victorias. Dodge Rams. International eighteen-wheelers. And look: Hung Pham of Honda USA is just now showing off. "Look, Ma! No Hands!" He is careening down Interstate I5 at 55 miles per hour, waving his arms out the window. Tiny magnets embedded in the asphalt hold the magnetized vehicle inside the lane's boundaries. Computers control the speed. A spokesman for the National Automated Highway System Consortium says it's like being driven by a chauffeur.

★★★

I am on this road. I am not on this road. The unceasing agony of empire. The desperate lunge from gynecologist to internist, from acupuncturist to naturopath, eating macrobiotic, eating naturopathic, downing blue-green algae, sipping sterilized water — all in hopes of curbing the illness I find neither words nor pictures to describe.

There is pain in my uterus. It is like a stalactite, frozen, hard, scratching relentlessly against the flesh. I have long and unbearable periods now, brown blood, too frequent urination, and a haze of fatigue has settled over my bones.

Then, without warning, it happens. The icicle pierces its frosty sword straight into my womb. Jab! Jab! I leave the Earl Grey half-poured and collapse onto the Indian-print bedspread. Jab! Jab! Jab! I curl inward to cradle my torso. The pain is too overwhelming. I unfurl like a limp thread.

A moment of calm intervenes.

Then JAB JAB! JAB JAB! Oh, icicle! Icicle! Torrent of stabbing, grasping, twisting, sweating, heaving.

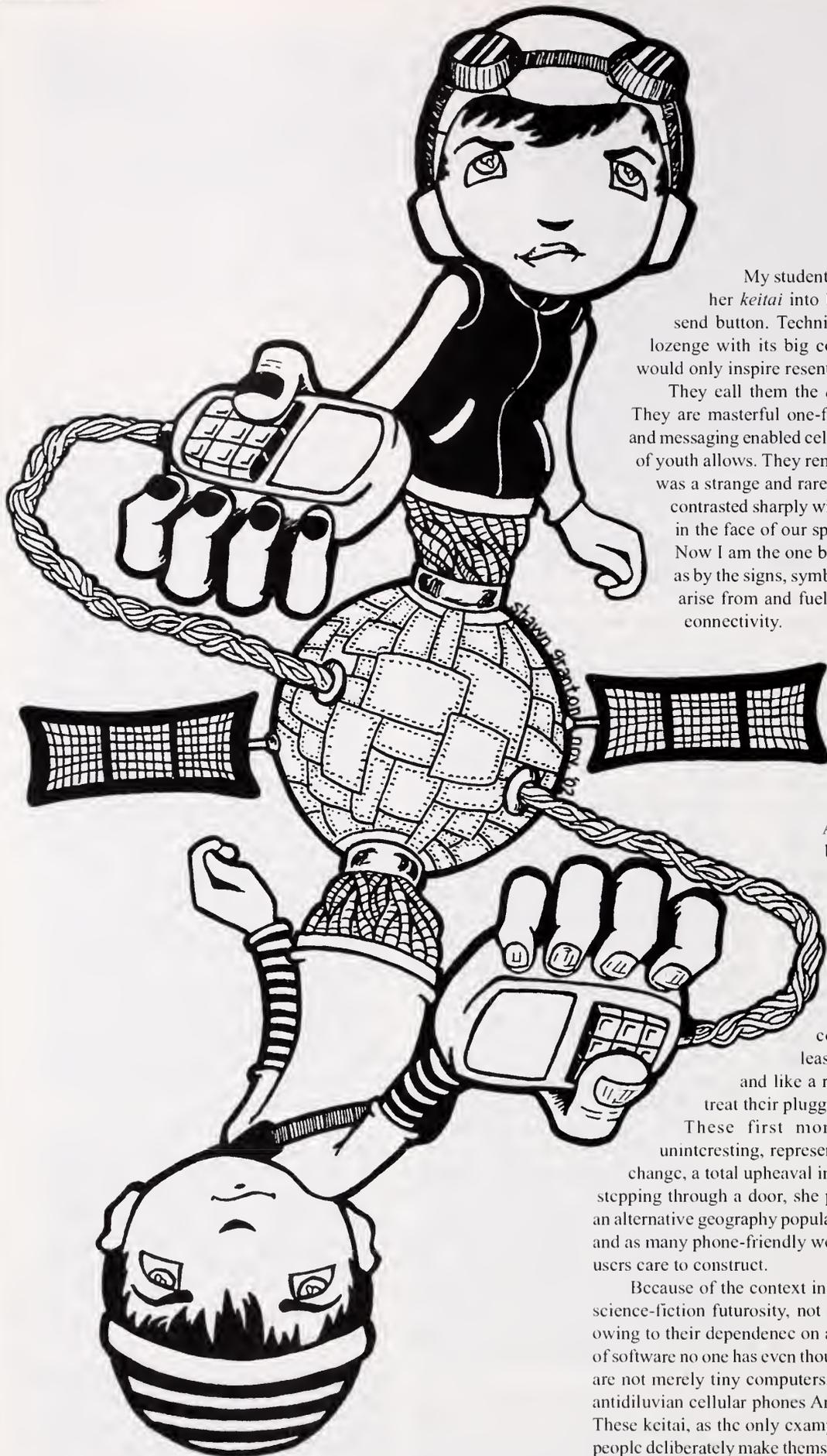
Then, inexplicably, peace. I gaze out the window at the acorns.

JAB! JAB! Again! JAB! JAB! JAB! My body writhing in convulsions, belly exposed, legs flung apart — as if at this very moment a rape were being enacted upon my body.

The global automated electronic superhighway is flung before us. We feel it. We do not feel it. Its symptoms are brown blood and a haze of fatigue, and at times they double back to explode in vicious stabs. Columbus Avenue. Army Street. We are writhing inside. Banana republic. Pixel value. As if a rape. www.com.

We do not want any more of this conquering. ★

Excerpted with permission from *Off the Map: An Expedition Deep into Empire and the Global Economy* by Chellis Glendinning. New Society Publishers, 2002. ISBN 0-86571-463-0. \$15.95. Paperback. Available at bookstores or directly from the publisher at 1-800-567-6772 or www.newsociety.com.



My student looks up, grinning nervously, shoving her *keitai* into her desk even as she fumbles for the send button. Technically I'm to confiscate the four inch lozenge with its big colorful liquid-crystal screen, but that would only inspire resentment.

They call them the *oya yubi sedai*, or thumb generation. They are masterful one-finger typists, habituated to their web and messaging enabled cell phones as only the cognitive plasticity of youth allows. They remind me of me at that age, when e-mail was a strange and rare thing and my facility with computers contrasted sharply with adult family members' helplessness in the face of our spanking new, gunmetal gray home PC. Now I am the one baffled, not so much by the technology as by the signs, symbols, conventions, and culture that both arise from and fuel my students' addiction to always-on connectivity.

They whip them out whenever there is an idle moment: on trains, on foot, at lunch. From bags and pockets emerge brightly colored globs of plastic, slim and aerodynamic save the anime-inspired or anti-cancer charms dangling from their tops. Unlike their American counterparts, who are beholden to a motley crew of proprietary networks for which the only mutually intelligible signal is the human voice, they almost never speak into their phones.

Instead, they focus on their keitai's two-inch diagonal screen, and, when in a group, drop out of the conversation entirely. (The youth, at least, never seem to think this is impolite, and like a river routing around obstacles, simply treat their plugged-in companion as if she isn't there.) These first moments of connection, outwardly uninteresting, represent for the individual in question a sea change, a total upheaval in terms of focus and attention. Easy as stepping through a door, she plugs into a collective consciousness, an alternative geography populated by her friends, countless strangers, and as many phone-friendly websites as the tens of millions of keitai users care to construct.

Because of the context in which they are used, these chunks of science-fiction futurocity, not available anywhere else in the world owing to their dependence on a Japan-only network and a great deal of software no one has even thought of translating into other languages, are not merely tiny computers, analogues of the e-mail kiosk or the antediluvian cellular phones Americans find themselves shackled to. These keitai, as the only example of what happens when millions of people deliberately make themselves accessible to a distributed, digital nervous system 24 hours a day, constitute humanity's first quasi-accidental go at cybernetics.

# Kore nani?

words Christopher Mims  
illustration Shawn Granton

Which is not to claim that having the equivalent of an AOL Instant Messenger in your pocket is all that funky a concept. What *is* funky is what having such an object allows.

The implications were first realized a few years ago by the pioneering youth of Finland (Nokia's world HQ). They discovered that the network effect brought about by ubiquitous cell phones, plus physical proximity owing to densely packed urban living, plus quality mass transit, gave rise to a social superfluidity, resulted in never having to plan where to meet more than ten minutes in advance, meant that any public space became a rendezvous point and any number of fellow h. sapiens could join up with or break off from the group at any time. The advantage a keitai has over its European precedents is the same one conferred by e-mail: the receiver of the signal need not be available at the moment the signal is sent in order to receive the message. Communication occurs at everyone's earliest convenience.

It's exactly this sort of technologically assisted telepathy that is necessary in a country as urbanized as Japan. Its metropolises sport the highest population density in the world — imagine New York times ten — and with it comes all the consequent alienation anyone who has ever lived in a big city can attest to. Human beings aren't equipped to cope with hundreds or thousands of strangers pouring through our daily existence. The small village/clan/tribe model we spent most of our evolution as sapient beings adapting to isn't possible when everyone is a stranger and there isn't the time or the context in which to build strong bonds of reciprocal altruism.

Technology helps the Japanese make an end run around the problem. Solutions for meeting a mate include digital key chains programmed with their user's likes and dislikes, and set to go off in a show of light and sound when in the presence of a matching key chain programmed with sufficiently identical preferences. In a society in which people rarely introduce themselves to strangers, preferring third-party introductions, such technology provides a pretext for overcoming shyness.

Men who fear women (a not uncommon condition in Japanese society, but that's a dissertation in and of itself) may practice dating, via e-mail, an entirely computerized faux-girlfriend. Her sophisticated language-parsing software allows customers to carry on whole conversations with her via correspondence, all the while vying to keep her happy and interested through the right words, timing, and actions (she accepts gifts).

Increasingly, the interpersonal void left by the destruction of the extended family and the distance between family members brought about by the demands of work and school are filled, as in the U.S., by pets. (Desmond Morris once said that often as not a cat or a dog represents our attempt to ameliorate our deficits of affection and human contact.) But in Japan, where an efficiency apartment in Tokyo means Manhattan rent for a single 6-tatami room (or about eight feet by

## Japan is one of those experiments that nature has already performed for us: what happens when you cram a bunch of reverse luddites into a small space?

twelve) more and more people are turning to less physically demanding artificial pets.

Most of us are familiar with Aibo, Sony's robot dog (the second generation of which purportedly shows enough intelligence to chase balls and get cranky), but just as popular are games for Playstation which set pets loose in worlds of their own, free to grow, explore, get old, and die, all in real time.

Here the line between technology as aid and technology as crutch blurs. For even as communication technologies allow individuals to rebuild the ancestral village from a network of connections plucked from the seething mass of modern humanity, these technologies may also become ends in themselves, narcotics, like TV, that encourage us to plunge deeper and deeper into fantasy, into softly padded realities of our own construction.

Any Friday night on the main drag of a Japanese city, big or small, will find its game parlors packed. Here people of all sorts mingle — kids, adults, teenagers, couples on dates, late-night shoppers out for a stroll — bathed in a riot of colored lights, shouting at each other over the factory-floor chorus of hundreds of videogames unlike any available stateside. Hulking and loud, they feature bizarre input devices (picture a speed-typing game alongside a miniature amphitheater controlled by tambourines) or unconventional displays (horse racing games in which the track is represented both on screen and in meatspace, like a miniature railroad, complete with 2-inch plastic horses, legs thrashing, scooting towards the finish line as if by ghostly influence). They are monuments to the creativity designers invest in machine-assisted entertainment.

Despite the presence of groups, most of the people here came alone. The one in the corner pumping quarters into the vintage Street Fighter console may have just stopped by, or he or she may be emblematic of the Otaku — a word that in English has come to mean a fan of Japanese pop culture. In Japanese, it has a broader definition, meaning a fan of anything, an obsessive and meticulous collector, "the information age's embodiment of the connoisseur, more concerned with the accumulation of data than of objects," as William Gibson put it.

And while it would be inaccurate to brand all Otaku as social isolates, cut off from others save through their consumption of culture by means of ever more immersive and enrapturing technology, they are, as a phenomenon dependent on information technology, another expression of the forces that create technology's bastard children — people increasingly dedicated to machines instead of humanity.

Part of the reason Japan produces so much is that, like America, it has a huge domestic market. It serves as an incubator in which new ideas may be realized before being physically or memetically shipped off to the rest of the world. But there are some things that never make it off these shores, like role-playing videogames of fantastic complexity that are, their makers reason, too detailed and demanding to be of interest to non-Japanese. These entertainments represent the extreme outer fringe of isolationist computing- demanding enormous amounts of time and providing, in return, a different and more immediately hospitable place in which to live.

It's a phenomenon mimicked in the U.S. by the multi-user online communities, games that have in some cases inspired lawsuits on the grounds that they are addictive. And while these claims sound extravagant, the fact that they are given a hearing in the court of public opinion points out what most of us already suspect: technology is, in its own way, an addiction.

Japan is one of those experiments that nature has already performed for us: what happens when you cram a bunch of reverse luddites into a small space? As such, it becomes a parable with a theme so venerable as to be cliché: technology is a double-edged sword. It pushes in two opposing directions at once, widening the schisms between those at either end of the spectrum, polarizing our desires and ways of being. Even as it provides us with telepathy / teleportation, the be anywhere do anything capacity to link up with anyone anyhow anytime, it also *forces us to do so*, that is, it replaces the face-to-face interaction with the indirect, facilitated communication.

Proponents of memetics (the theory that ideas, or memes, reproduce and spread like genes) like to joke that a librarian is a library's way of making another library. The logic applies here, as well: at what point do the masters of technology become its slaves? At what point do interactions with computers become altogether easier and more satisfying than interactions with the rest of the world? As we create villages of like-minded people, as we find in virtual space niches for ever narrower expressions of our interests, are we not isolating ourselves even further?

One day I asked my sixteen and seventeen year old students what words came to mind when they thought of high school in America. Discussion ensued, and then an answer. Struggling with the translation, my co-teacher frowned. "Freedom," she finally offered. To my Western ears it seemed an almost stereotypically Japanese response, exactly what I would expect from indulged young rebels struggling to find their place in a society still closer to its strictly disciplined Confucian roots than to my student's media-saturated notions of the West's cultural laissez-faire.

Upon returning to the U.S. I revised my opinion of their answer. I realized that few young people here would claim to want anything less, even if it were just freedom from boredom or toil. Why else do we spend so much on the trappings of the digital age, if not in some vain hope that these objects will simplify or enhance our lives?

Whether or not technology delivers on its implicit promise, one thing for sure is that it changes us. It encourages new behaviors, enables the unheard-of, and in the course of integrating it into our lives ever more completely, we make it as indispensable as teeth or eyes or a tongue. It is a part of our evolution, and if we are to believe Gould, is therefore neither good nor bad, undirected and free from the burdens of progress. But try telling that to the Otaku in all of us, convinced of the rightness of our forward march even as we worry over the slow erosion of our time spent face-to-face with unelaborated humanity. ★

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*front porch stories*

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Back in early 1995, after moving from Philadelphia and settling into Brooklyn, I signed up for internet service with an independent technology group called People-Link. This small yet mighty group working out of a brownstone in the Sunset Park section of Brooklyn promoted themselves as an organization run by people of color to serve and meet the needs of grassroots community groups and activists. Perfect for someone like me who was looking to support an independent media provider who could both meet my media needs and act as a defense against the then-burgeoning internet conglomerates (now dominated by AOL-Time Warner — more on this later).

As so often happens in life, what appears to be a routine event actually turns out to be a life-altering experience. Nearly eight years has passed since I first logged on to the People-Link network and along the way, we have formed a powerful alliance with my group La Lutta New Media Collective that runs deep. We have come to work hand-in-hand on a host of media-tech projects.

During this period, People-Link has grown from an internet service provider (ISP) to a Web host/service provider dispensing expert media service to the counterculture underground. They host our site 75 web sites residing on their servers, many of them unions and trade related — all of them progressive, community-based groups. While it all begins and ends with linking people together, the tool People-Link uses to do this is technology.

words & photos

Antonino D'Ambrosio, La Lutta NMC

Alfredo Lopez (pictured below) has made a life of combining existing technologies with new media technology as “a pliable mechanism to initiate the process of communication between people.” He added, “Technology is in and of itself an *ideology* — not the actual physical hardware like a computer — and that ideology can be used to alienate people or connect communities... our struggle is to use it to connect people who are grossly underrepresented and thereby denied access... and the reality is that people of color, the poor and the working class are those most excluded.”

Lopez carries 35 years of deep, committed struggle with him and a look at his past media-tech activism is impressive. After visiting the Young Lords, the radical Puerto Rican group who had taken over the First People's Church in Harlem in 1970, he was emboldened to become an active participant in the struggle for equality, human rights and for Puerto Rican independence. This was the first of many consciousness shaping chance meetings with influential New York City radicals that would propel Lopez into the heart of the struggle.

During this same year, he met Ruth Reynolds, a former aide to the great Puerto Rican liberationist Pedro Albizu Campos. Reynolds recognized Lopez's blossoming gift of communication and enlisted him in the effort to free political prisoner Carlos Feliciano, who faced 80 years in prison for allegedly making and planting bombs throughout

# UP ON THE BLOCK

# THE POWER



New York City. Lopez became National Coordinator on this campaign, which resulted in Feliciano's total exoneration.

At the tender age of 21, Lopez was recognized as a skilled organizer, a dynamic communicator and a nationally recognized revolutionary. In addition, the young man who loved books was the author of one recounting the struggle to free Carlos Feliciano. Lopez would go on to publish a total of five books, all written in his unique journalistic style.

Along the way he worked shoulder to shoulder with Arthur Felberbaum (founder of the venerable Brecht Forum of New York City), Norman Hodgett of the Socialist Worker's Party and Ramon Arbona of the Puerto Rican Socialist Party (PSP). It was the latter who corralled Lopez into becoming the Editor-in-Chief of the American edition of Puerto Rico's newspaper *Claridad*. Lopez was asked to produce a Spanish/English edition which he did, at first to great resistance by the older *independitistas* of the Puerto Rican American community.

All of these experiences taught Lopez the effectiveness of the issue of propaganda as he describes it. Using technology such as print, radio and film helped the PSP to recruit, communicate and connect with the growing Puerto Rican population in New York City. As a result, the PSP became the center of political activity and Lopez found

himself appointed as the main cadre for national political outreach/activity with the left.

Lopez and the PSP's work would result in two significant movement-building actions. The first, organized in 1974, was an event commemorating the 20th anniversary of Puerto Rican nationalists attacking the House of Representatives in 1954. The event was held at Madison Square Garden in the heart of New York City. Lopez explained that this event helped him learn that "the only limitations you have are the ones you place on yourself."

He continued, "No one thought that these Puerto Ricans could pull this off at Madison Square Garden but we did and it was successful because we tried to do it... it's as simple as that, we tried... the use of propaganda via the media was crucial." The event featured over 40 acts including Ray Barreto, Lucito Benitez and Jane Fonda and drew a sell-out crowd of over 19,000 people. Lopez's wife, Maritza Mahi Arrastia, a committed creative-activist, added, "At this event is where we learned that our nation was in struggle."

The Madison Square Garden event vaulted Lopez and the PSP to a new, yet difficult position. They had people's attention. It was critical to keep that attention and translate that into action, so the next event was even more ambitious and required the use of every technological tool available to them in effort to galvanize large numbers of people.

# OF PEOPLE-LINK



In 1976, they did just that by staging a counter-Bicentennial in Philadelphia. The action drew over 40,000 people and again brought momentous attention to the human rights and social justice issues that PSP was advocating. For Lopez, all of this was made possible by implementing technological strategies that urged people to come together and actively participate.

Which brings me to what I refer to Lopez's second life as a *tecmnitista* of the new media underground. After his work with the PSP, Lopez began work as a journalist and worked with the *Village Voice*, the *Bergen Record* and *Seven Days Magazine*. Again, Lopez's belief that organizers are and must be communicators allowed him to continue to forge new alliances and relationships with people throughout the left, particularly in the media. He added that this is where, with the introduction of emerging technologies like the personal computer, it became critical "to challenge the top-down form of media, which represented an onerous form of oppression."

Bringing all of this to bear, he founded Lopez Communications. Lopez Communications offered progressive organizations a vehicle to express and promote their issues. Exhilarated, Lopez produced prodigious amounts of media including a television show (*City Look*), a radio show (*The Communique*) and countless short documentaries. Lopez Communications morphed into the Institute for Mass Communications and shortly thereafter People-Link, its online project, was born.

"The internet and other new media technologies like digital video allow us to form relationships and work with people who can shut this country down," Lopez said. If the medium is utilized effectively, it requires, (and Lopez is adamant about this), "looking to other technologies that sensitize you to what the mass culture are exposed to like TV ... by doing this we understand what people want or are conditioned to want which helps us create new media that is useful to people."

People-Link encourages this activity by empowering all those who host sites with it to interact with the technology by, for example, updating and maintaining your own calendar, news section, listservs or whatever the site requires to provide information to people. Lopez made a significant point that can best be understood in relation to the internet giant AOL. "AOL exists via mystification, alienation and creating a top-down experience," Lopez explained. "If you have an account with AOL, your relationship is fundamentally and primarily with AOL ... and more disturbing when you interact in a chat room. For example, AOL encourages you to lie about your identity (aliases) ... in effect, there is no truth in the experience."

In direct opposition to this, People-Link consciously chooses to build web sites with little or no JavaScript, for example, so members unaccustomed and unwilling to use computers — like unions with large and diverse members — can easily work with, manipulate and expand the site. Also, the People-Link crews are always available to work directly with anyone who has a site with them. Lopez describes this philosophy as one of the fundamental elements of what People-Link represents: "If we do as much as we can in an accessible way in the short term, the people who are with us will be empowered in the long run. It has paid off because some of the bigger groups, like Local 100 Transit Workers Union, who were completely at a loss when we first put the site up a year ago, are now updating their own site ... that is 34,000 union members using the internet to communicate."

Next, technology allows People-Link to put politics in command. La Lutta NMC's work with People-Link is a good example of this. As our web site and activity grew to staggering numbers, Lopez and his crew oftentimes worked with little or no fee to help us meet the demand. It is here where the great promise of technology is realized in terms of a democratic medium. It also challenges the idea that technology rarely benefits those that it is intended to benefit. While this is often the case, particularly for people of color and the very poor in this country and many developing nations, People-Link's activities attempt to prove otherwise.

In many ways, People-Link promotes a truer, purer form of democracy through using new media technology. They look to challenge groups on the left who historically have been resistant to elements of democracy, thereby creating sectarian divisions that undermine movement building. For example, Lopez described how his media work with unions has made him realize that groups like these are fearful of opposition due in large part to the anti-union ideology that permeates our society, thanks in large part to a corporate owned American press. The result is that, as Lopez said, they "Resist opening up, reaching out... they are scared to death of it and this ends up promoting exclusion and greater alienation."

Technology cuts across other social barriers like historical generational differences that seem to separate veteran activists from promising young ones. Lopez finds that he learns much more than he could ever hope to teach because his work places him in the unusual position of directly interacting with creative activists half his age. As a result, completely new, fresh and innovative partnerships are formed that are instrumental in movement building.

In fact, Lopez's two sons, Karim (24) and Lucas (21), play key roles in the Institute for Mass Communication. Karim is a talented filmmaker who works with digital video and manages People-Link's discussion board. Lucas is a creative hip-hop artist who is involved in an independent digital music project called *Blacklist*, but it does not end there. Myself and other members of La Lutta NMC as well as other *mediatistas* throughout New York City pool resources with People-Link, typifying a unique cross-cultural exchange.

By using technology in a way that is broad-based but specific to the issues and concerns of grossly ignored communities, People-Link is exploding the systemic inequities rooted in new media technologies like the internet. The strategy of using new media as a process to facilitate communication and promote solidarity lends itself well to destroying the elitism rife in the technology world.

Up on the block of 54th Street and 5th Avenue, People-Link has struggled now for over a decade to smash the exclusivity of the internet and technology in general. They confront the dominance of a media elite who dictates emerging technology policy both in terms of usage and access. They embody a movement beyond the rhetoric of giving a voice to the voiceless but rather are agents for revolutionary change looking to shift power to those who are powerful but just don't feel it yet. ★

*Note: To join People-Link or find out more about it contact Alfredo Lopez at [alfredo@people-link.net](mailto:alfredo@people-link.net) or go to the People-Link website <http://www.people-link.org>.*

**The Internet and other new media technologies like digital video allow us to form relationships and work with people who can shut this country down.**



The veteran giant of the business, Big Brothers Big Sisters, is one such organization that doubts the effectiveness of their rookie counterparts so dependent on the Internet. Margaret Holmes, the program director of Catholic Big Brothers Big Sisters for Brooklyn and Queens comments, "Virtual volunteering should be the last resort. You need to see somebody, know their expressions, the joy in the face and their voice. Those are the things that these kids are missing out on."

But it still begs the question: would they be missing out on a lot more if potential volunteers chose not to mentor at all because of the time commitment? Samantha Anders, also in the entertainment industry, explains that she went to a Big Brothers Big Sisters orientation, but couldn't come up with the time that was required: "It just would have been way too much." She is now considering becoming part of iMentor, a program that her sister, also a New York professional, has found great satisfaction in doing.

iMentor believes that their mentor/mentee pairs don't lack the kind of interpersonal development crucial to real connection just because their relationships exist, for the most part, in cyberspace. In the organization's three years of existence, they have reported a huge level of success. In the launch year, 74% of students claimed that iMentor had made a real difference in their lives and 89% of the mentors involved said that they felt like iMentor was a vehicle through which they could make a real difference in a young person's life.

Even given this high approval rate, however, iMentor did decide to incorporate more face-to-face requirements into the mentoring program. "Before we were just asking for a semester long commitment and that the mentors and mentees met up once or twice during that semester," Oh reports, "but that didn't seem like enough to create really deep connections, so now we are requiring the pairs to commit to a full year and meet up at least once a month."

Hodges, for one, believes this policy change was imperative: "I think it is so important that they changed the requirement of in-person meetings. Even though it is mentoring through e-mail, maybe even more so because it is, mentors have to be really aggressive about getting to know their kids. You have to really engage them."

She describes one moment in her relationship with her mentee when she felt compelled to be aggressive: "Once my mentee got in a fight at school — a physical one — and I found out so I e-mailed her and asked her about it. I wanted to know what it was that made her so angry she could hit someone. I think I was able to prompt her to think about it more."

Melillo echoes Hodges' sentiment: "The ideal situation would be if we had more contact, but the fact that we are doing this over e-mail means we can have more frequent meaningful conversations. Chris and I talked about philosophies, not just 'problems.'"

Antonette Brown, a former mentee, also appreciated the easy method of communication: "I have to say that I really connected with my mentor...we were both open-minded and able to talk about practically anything. Most importantly, we made it an effort to be in contact with each other every single day." Big Brothers Big Sisters volunteers are required to meet up on a bi-monthly, sometimes even weekly, basis.

The virtual volunteering method has also turned out, serendipitously, to be a tool for many immigrant students who are learning English for the first time. Oh describes how it wasn't part of the original plan, but while visiting a school she discovered that English as a second language (ESL) students found iMentor's structure comforting. "This one student told me that the e-mail component made him feel accepted. He didn't have to feel self-conscious about speaking on the phone or in-person with someone. Instead, he could read over what he had written and even ask his mentor to edit it with him. Eventually, he

was really excited to meet his mentor," she explained.

Beyond the important statement that these relationships inherently make — that young and not-so-young from vastly different backgrounds can come together — many students are making powerful statements of their own through the web sites they cultivate.

In a moment of pure intellectual bravado, high school student and iMentor program mentee Anthony Pittman writes, "Anthony Pittman is the smartest man in the world." Integrated into the design of his website are a series of disturbing photos: a burning cross against the blackness of a night sky, a cropped and controlled pair of wrists handcuffed, and two brutal and disturbing lynching images. His chilling creation is titled, "The Understanding" ([www.altaschools.org/schools/uhhs/imentor/pittman/right.html](http://www.altaschools.org/schools/uhhs/imentor/pittman/right.html)).

Blake too tackles the painful and pressing issue of racism. His commentary, set side-by-side with his mentor, "Mr. Joe's," insightfully reads: "Our country was founded on racial discrimination. That shows how far our roots are planted into this problem, which is probably the main reason why we can not solve it...this is the technologically advanced society we live in?" ★



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## The Cars of My Youth

Here: a succession of small and dingy cars, the cars of my working-class friends. Cars that sputtered and died, cars that required elaborate ritualized starting procedures, rusty cars with duct-taped seats. Brandyn taught me to drive stick in her ancient tan Rabbit out in the backwoods of Seabeck, empty miles of second growth and logging roads. I killed that car countless times, clutch stinking, the car jerking frantically in its desperation to escape my ineptitude. Waiting in cars in the Safeway parking lot, looking for sailors to buy us beer and making swift getaways before they could ask to drink it with us. Some of my friends fucked sailors but I never did. They terrified me, all hulking bodies and terrible haircuts and dead empty eyes. The cars of boys whose names I cannot remember, murky boys in dim lighting, corduroy, and sweat. Crisscrossing my shithole navy hometown for hours every night in cars, looking for someone with pot, an elusive connection who rarely came through. My dad had a cell phone in his car before there were cell phones, a cell phone as big as my head and able to receive calls only within a six-block radius of our house. I never

had a car in high school. I lived through the cars of my friends the Arty Kids, all five of us. Everyone in my high school thought we were fucking each other. I come from the kind of town most people never leave, sinking slowly into the quagmire of babies and Wal-Mart, surrounded by the carcasses of cars. The summer after I graduated I spent three months on a timber crew, flagging clearcuts with two funny and huge-hearted timber-blood boys deeply apprehensive about mishandling the boss's daughter. I took up cussing profusely to cure their fears and they taught me to drive a cherrypicker, a flatbed fire truck, and a succession of giant pickups, each larger than the last. They were the first real boys I'd ever met, not the sleazy navy fucks or rich boys or terrifying drunk jocks I'd grown up with; haybailing, car-fixing, infinitely capable boys who chose their words well and knew the names of every tree and plant and bird we saw. They drove trucks, beautiful gleaming trucks they'd worked all their lives to afford, trucks they polished religiously, purchased special floor mats and bed coatings for, trucks they loved with a passion I found both unfathomable and deeply endearing. The first boys I loved, brothers I'd never had. The cars

of my youth blur together, a haze of Nirvana and gasoline fumes. Dust and flannel, forests, and broken dreams.

## The Spacecar

Though it pains me to admit it, the first car I ever drove was my daddy's honky-white SUV. For all our beatdown Carharts and rusty vans, we silver spoon kids are never far from our roots. Though my Explorer days are long gone and I've never made the phone call home to bail my ass out of broke, the option is always there. My parents always drove spankin-new Practical Cars, nothing flashy like the other rich moms and dads I knew, but fancy cars all the same, cars that never broke down or talked back or got old. Safety first cars without souls. I've always envied the hard-won ability to pop a hood and know what the fuck was going on beneath it, what noises went with what malfunctions, and what weird rattles were just the engine talking to itself. The cars of my parents taught me nothing. I didn't learn to change my own oil until I turned 20. My parents bought me the car I still drive, a 1997 just-barely used Toyota Corolla originally destined for the placid life of the upper middle

# My Love Affair(s) with the Automobile

That boy was sleepy eyes and road stories and a warrior heart, a safe place. I was a ball of broken glass and anger, barbed wire for a heart, despair for a lover. And then something happened and I was in the passenger seat being carried the other way.



class, a hermetic space for the freeway between home and office. In four years my friends and I have put 50,000 miles on that car, and I've abused it with the belligerent carelessness I apply to all the Nice Things in my life. Coast to coast and back again, Canada to Mexico and up and down 101 to 1 more times than I can count. My valiant and infinitely serviceable spacecar has delivered without fail a perfectly smooth ride and 40 miles to the gallon. My car loves me despite my blatant disregard for its well being. I've often thought of selling it, more to shuck the final tie to my parents' money than for any rational premise, but I know I'll never be able to afford a car like that on my own. It's a far cry from the pristine vehicle delivered to my door by my parents; bumpers destroyed, headlights duct-taped in place, gleaming white coat dulled to a permanent shade of dingy except for the once a year I'm close enough to a hose and ambition to wash it down. Despite myself, I love that car back, that endless reminder of where I come from. It's impossible to look cool while driving the spacecar, a truth that keeps me humble. There are plenty of advantages to a car so utterly unremarkable, unnoticed by cops and car thieves alike, a car that nobody remembers. I've driven past cops going 25 over and never been ticketed, state patrol forgetting what my car looks like before it's even out of sight. My patient car is waiting for me to assemble enough maturity to treat it decently: tune-ups and trusty mechanics, a new paint job, body work, some kind words. We've come a long way together. The spacecar no longer embarrasses me as a flaming beacon of the privilege I'll never shake, full bellies and white picket fences. My car, like my parents, remains bewildered by my pigheaded leftist vagaries but faithful to the end, certain I'll soon land a real job and some decent clothes. But these are desperate times and that car is my freedom, my ticket to the wide belly of the desert where I can forget for a little while that the world's ending, counting miles through dust back to the ocean, looking for home.

**The Incog**

I'll tell you last about the car I learned to love in. Because these are, like I said, desperate times, and the people who don't give a fuck are winning. I'm no hippie and I know that love changes nothing, saves no little children or flowers, no bombs from falling. Love is not hope. But love is fuel for the fire, a little more courage to go down fighting, to demand the world bear witness to our resistance. Something more to live well for. Some people's love stories are about mountains or water, some about deep thoughts, some about

people. My love story started with one Dodge Ram and one boy. Learning to love a little thing can teach you to love the world. That truck was falling apart, bumpers and dents and rust and INCOGNITO painted jerky black on the side. That boy was sleepy eyes and road stories and a warrior heart, a safe place. I was a ball of broken glass and anger, barbed wire for a heart, despair for a lover. And then something happened and I was in the passenger seat being carried the other way. I learned back roads and highways I'd never dreamed of, the vast wasteland of Nevada, the edge of the Grand Canyon, the smooth coast into Santa Cruz. I learned, finally, to drive stick with some success. I learned the parts of cars for the first time — exhaust manifold muffler alternator sparkplugs radiator fuel filter, valves and gaskets, wires. I learned the workings of the engine, the miracle of internal combustion. Think about it: your car is running on explosions, fire, and light. The car that is your paradox, your open road, bought with the oil that is other people's blood. I'd never seen anything like the Incog, a truck that ran thousands of miles on love alone, a truck that could tell stories. I lived in that truck, fucked in that truck, fell in love in that truck. Woke up mornings in that truck and peered out the window and said hello to the ocean, sand everywhere, wide blue skies. That truck smelling always of kerosene, littered with juggling torches and bits of fiberglass wicking, old books, dirty socks, boy smell. We become warriors in difficult days because we are given no other choice, because when pushed to the edge we will fight like hell for what we love on this earth. So I tell love stories and we hold hands, knowing better than to pretend anything will be okay, knowing better than to think we will be alive when all of this is over. So they say: Only the dead have seen the end of war. I choose love. That truck passed into other hands long ago. The last I heard it was still going strong. ★

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# WARSAWPACK

In a review in the Nov/Dec 2003 issue of Clamor, I said WarsawPack had put out one of the best records of the year. Their ability to combine insightfully creative and progressively political lyrics (not the same old "fuck the government" bullshit some other punk bands seemed content to rest their collective hats on) and the fact that their sound is impossible to pigeonhole still puts this at the top of the list for releases put out in 2002. I was lucky enough to have the opportunity to exchange some words with a couple members of the WarsawPack collective. I wanted to find out what they're all about, since they're relatively new on the scene. If you like what they have to say here in this limited forum, check out their most recent release, *Gross Domestic Product* on G-7 Welcoming Committee Records, and you'll wonder why you haven't been listening to it all year.

interview by **Jason Kucsma** **Spec One** photo **Jon Shledewitz**

CLAMOR: *Tell us a little bit about Warsawpack. Who's involved. How you're organized. A little bit of WP's history.*

LEE: Warsawpack was born in the fall of 1999, started by (then) guitarist Scott Rankin, Jari Wassman, Matt Iwanowski and myself — just basement stuff really. The horns came aboard about a month later, and our DJ joined in the early winter. We started gigging around October/November of '99 and just kept going. We've lost a couple over the years, but nothing too fundamental.

We act as a collective when it comes to decision making, great and small — artistic and financial. It probably makes us a little bureaucratic with our timing sometimes, seven opinions on every detail, but it keeps everybody on the same page or at least reading the same book.

*I find your music to be really accessible in that there is something for everyone to get into, but your lyrics are obviously more politically radical than typical "alternative" fare. How do you all come to this? How does it play out to different audiences (i.e. mainstream vs. "the converted")?*

LEE: I don't really think of it as a conscious decision for the band; it was just sort of there. We really didn't realize what a big part of our musical persona it would become or how it would play out to those trying to understand us in indie band speak. For me it was just always there — I was weaned on hip-hop, good 'conscious' hip-hop. And for an MC to speak in radical terms isn't really all that strange — especially back then (Public Enemy, BDP, KRS, Tribe, De la, etc.). Hip-hop has always been, at least somewhat, politicized just in its representation of race and class alone, for instance. It has certainly lost its way (or rather, been abducted by execs).

In the same way that Simon blowing into a horn makes notes, or Matt banging a drum makes beats, me opening my mouth made radical lyrics: that's just how I rhyme.

ADAM: I joined the band thinking it was going to be a funk band. I was able to hear a poor-quality rehearsal tape before making the first practice, but even there, I couldn't really understand anything that Lee was saying. It wasn't until rehearsing a few times that I really understood what he was all about. While I'll admit to never being a very politically-minded youth, it was around the time that I joined the band that I started forming opinions and ideas about the world and about those who control it. Lee's political rants seemed appropriate to me at the time. It's simply a case of us loving the sound of Lee's rhyming over the music we were creating.

SIMON: I think that as long as people are thinking about these highly relevant issues it

can't help but have a positive effect. It would be nice to have a society that's a little more self-conscious.

*Politically charged music like WP's has the amazing potential to politicize listeners who might not be exposed to this information or ways of thinking otherwise. How important was/is music to each of you in developing your political consciousness.*

LEE: Its role has changed over the years for me. As a teenager, music was everything to me. My entire worldview could be summarized in the liner notes of my record collection. Music shaped my thinking and self image.

It was as important to me as a close friend. If Chuck

D thought something wasn't cool — well then, so did I. I lived for my music.

But as I've gotten older, I've found other sources for the info I crave. Music still speaks to me in a way that writers and academics never could — but it doesn't TEACH me like it once did. It can articulate a viewpoint in creative and interesting ways, it still inspires me — but essentially I don't look to music for guidance as I once had.

*What else would you point to as radicalizing/consciousness-raising influences for you?*

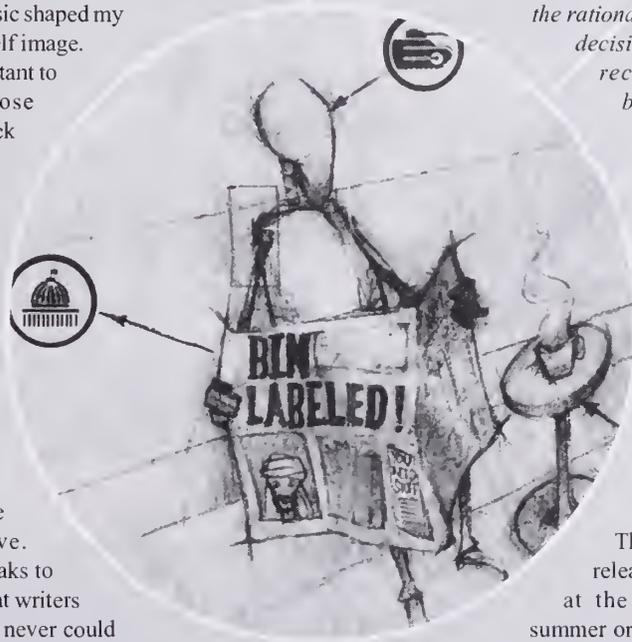
LEE: Books, film, music and art pushed me that direction. But I guess it was just people mostly — like-minded friends growing up; my university years; my mom, a rebel in her own right.

But if I had to point to one concrete influence — it would have to be the time I spent overseas. I spent about three years traveling through Europe and Asia — living in Eastern Europe for a year, and in South Asia for a year and a half. And really, everything changed. My place in the cosmos became clear. My position in the global hierarchy was defined. Everywhere I looked I could see the effects of my fat ass culture. Shoe factories, hungry kids, charity organizations driving imported SUV's, fresh produce soaked in American DDT, porky white guys hunting for prostitutes — it was inescapable. Before long, I became embarrassed of my home — and ashamed to

be North American. I came home a changed man.

SIMON: School has had a big influence on me. I learned about third world development in one of my first year courses, and the interest in other issues kind of stemmed from that. I realized that it will be impossible to help anybody or any part of the world without any sort of context in which to do it. Right now I'm taking a Peace Studies course and we discussed Chomsky's definition of terrorism. So school's still big with me.

*You released Gross Domestic Product on September 11, 2002. What was the rationale behind the decision? Did you receive any backlash from it? What a b o u t positive feedback about the decision?*



LEE: It was G7's idea — but we were in agreement.

They wanted to release the album at the end of the summer or early fall: 9/11 fit the timing and seemed the ideal rallying point for an album launch.

The date has become a kind of symbol and has served so many masters, we figured why not us? The US Defense Department has used the date to rally its citizens to war. Oil execs have used the date to begin carving up the last of the earth's oil resources. The TV has used the date to sell airtime. Racists use the date to spread hate. Conservatives use the date to instill fear. Some, like us, have used the symbolism of the date to sow some resistance. Resistance to the official BS, the propaganda, the bias, the hate, the warmongering. While primetime ran sentimental rubbish: slow-mo shots of firemen holding their helmets over their hearts, and Dubya banging on his little war drum calling "next up Iraq!" we wanted to reclaim the date's symbolic meaning — remind folks that 9/11 was a kind of wake-up call. And that we have really got to stop hitting that snooze button if we're going to ever make it, ye know?

ADAM: I loved it because it made some people uncomfortable. That date immediately brings to mind everything that CNN taught us during the months following the event, and I can't stand that (the media practically encouraged

racism through their coverage). The date should bring to light the bigger picture for this planet, and for us, it seemed like a good way to perhaps open up the eyes of those who were initially uncomfortable with it.

SIMON: I was kind of hesitant about the whole thing ... but Lee explained it well. It's not that we're glorifying the violence of that day, but we are condemning the reaction that it received — people lament the tragedy but then support a war which will take even more lives, and whose success is questionable at best.

*Earlier I mentioned the accessibility of WP's sound as something that a lot of people could get into easily. I know y'all had interest from some mainstream/corporate labels, but you chose to go with G-7 Welcoming Committee Records. Could you tell us a little about how y'all made the decision?*

LEE: Well — we independently released our album in March of 2002, and I mean truly indie — straight out of our pockets. And the lesson was learned — truly "indie" bands need truly rich parents. We did come to realize though that if we are going to get anywhere with this we are going to need somebody in our corner. The band was getting some good buzz, and we had offers to 'come and visit' with different

A&R's from some of the major labels, but we really didn't have much interest in becoming part of the apparatus. We had heard horror stories about deals gone wrong, bands getting screwed, bands getting buried, etc. Pretty much EVERYONE we met from 'the industry' seemed creepy at best and touched us in the wrong way, ya know? It took very little debate to get the seven of us in agreement: major label = major assholes. And all theorizing aside — we would never had lasted as a major label act — all the nonsense — breakfast television spots, talk shows, 24-hour interview schedules, bah! Besides — September 11 would have put our entire album on that nasty "DO NOT PLAY" list.

So what's a pack of commie pinkos to do? We did some digging around — talked to friends and fellow musicians — tried to figure out who might "feel: the album. Our friends at G7 Welcoming Committee Records just happened to top our little list. We weren't sure how they would take us — they had nothing

"urban" on their roster — but we thought they would dig the rant we were on. The worldview seemed to be a good match, so to speak. So we sent them out a promo copy of the disc and (lo and behold!) they got back to us right away. They loved it and wanted to see a copy of the lyrics. Done and done — shortly after they came for a visit, checked out a couple of shows, and within no time we were "signed." And so far, we couldn't be happier with how things are going — they are a truly excellent group of people. One might say we are smitten — like a pack of schoolgirls — a n a r c h o - c o m m i e schoolgirls.

SIMON: G7 has been nothing short of fantastic... and to be honest, I can't think of any other option in terms of labels that would give us the support and let us write lyrics like we do. They're not squeamish at all and they came to us with that... if anything they're far, far more radical than we are. Radical makes them sound like they're crazy ... they're not... they're also nice as anything.★



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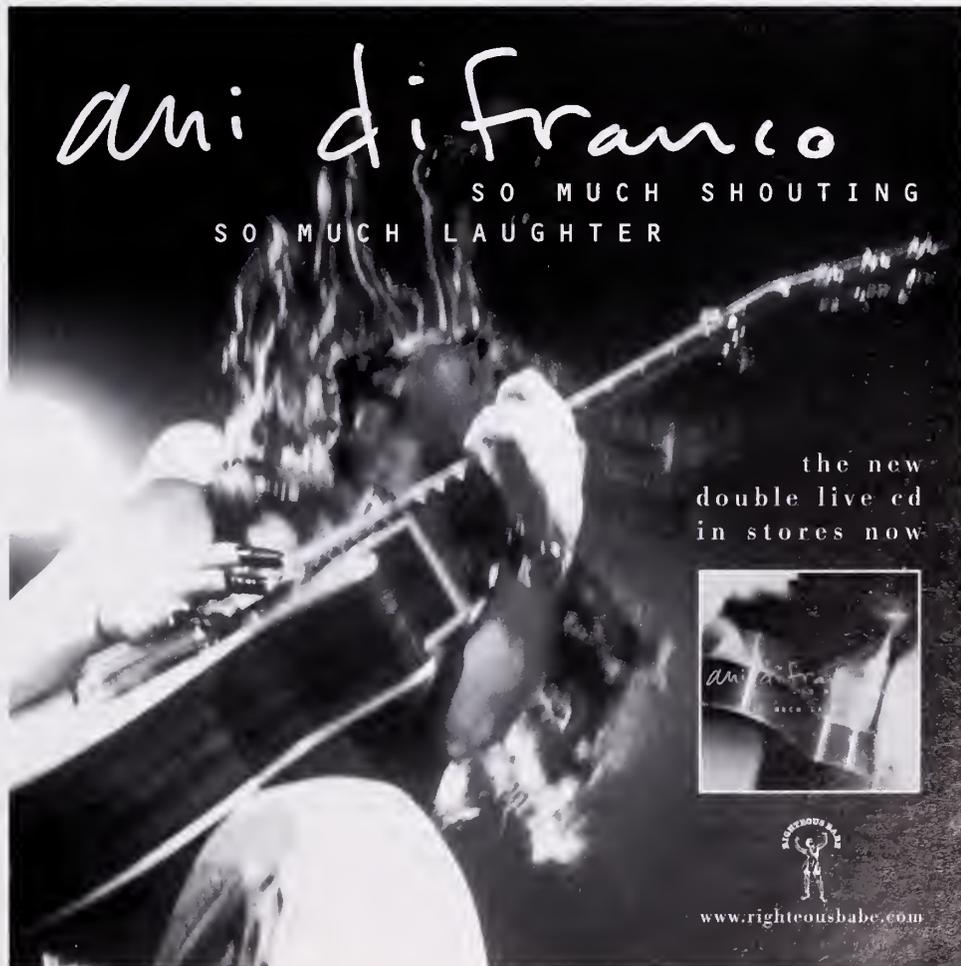
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**RADIO KILLED**

The gritty history of  
**THE PROMETHEUS RADIO PROJECT**  
and how the technology of today  
will change the face of tomorrow's radio.

# THE RADIO STAR

by Hannah Sassaman

Here in the trenches of the battle for media democracy, irony is not lost on the coworkers of the Prometheus Radio Project. They've just found out that the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) will finally select "In Band On Channel" (IBOC) as the technology that will bring analog radio into the digital age. The coworkers at Prometheus are angry. They permit themselves a moment of grimacing and shuddering, and they clench their fists in frustration as they field their phone calls from newspapers asking for comment and allies brimming with sympathy.

So, what's Prometheus? The Prometheus Radio Project is a non-profit organization created by radio activists to facilitate the growth of the free radio movement. Free, as in legal Low Power FM stations independently run, built, programmed, and broadcast by community groups. Radio, as in that technology that vibrates the airwaves on a particular frequency, reaching thousands of people on the cheap. And movement, as in an educational and political DIY shockwave reverberating across the country as mass-produced broadcasting gets outed as the crap that it is. Prometheus takes refugees from the pirate radio movement, current pirates, community groups, social justice activists, independent music makers, and everyday citizens, and teaches them how to build low-power stations. It's exciting, enriching, and sexy as hell. (Test out the energy in that open field where you raise your radio tower to see what I mean.)

Prometheus was founded in Philadelphia from the ashes of Radio Mutiny, a pirate station that had operated for a year and a half in defiance of the unfair regulations governing the airwaves. When the FCC, then under the leadership of Chairman William Kennard, barged into their studio and shut them down, the Mutiny programmers didn't collapse quietly. The combined efforts of hundreds of stations like Mutiny created a public relations nightmare for the FCC. Kennard, under growing pressure from media and civil liberties groups, finally announced that he was going to do everything he could to create a legal microradio service for you and me and the freckled kid next door! At first, the shocked Mutinites assumed that the announcement was just a lot of spin-control, but it eventually became clear that Kennard was serious. In order to deal with the newly created Low Power FM service, and the hopes and challenges that accompanied it, that group of former pirates founded the Prometheus Radio Project.

The unsexy part of Prometheus's work involves endless wrestling with the politically-appointed heads of the FCC, now under the titular "leadership" of Michael Powell, the son of our Secretary of State. Powell is a yes-man appointee to the office with no interest in the public interest. Team him up with our House of Representatives and Senate, and the Low Power FM service that Kennard passed was subsequently gutted out of recognition. In the fall of 2000, the House of Representatives passed a bill with riders that eviscerated the low-power radio initiative, eliminating 80 percent of the new stations that were supposed to be distributed. Hoping for one of the five radio stations scheduled to be built in Minneapolis? Now you're down to none. None for New York, none for Chicago, none for almost any big city across America, not to mention most middle-to-small cities and towns. And why? Because a group of representatives and senators passed, in a blink of an eye, the third-adjacent rule. Even though the FCC's engineers had already determined that interference from low-power stations on commercial, high-power broadcasts was negligible, Congress still demanded that the space separating stations must move from second-adjacent frequencies (from 88.5 FM to 89.1 FM) to third-adjacent frequencies (from 88.5 FM to 89.3 FM). Congress forced the FCC to contract an independent corporation to research whether licensing new community stations would create more interference. Only a small dribbling of radio stations would be released to communities until the study was completed.

Now, here's that aforementioned irony that caused Prometheans to moan: The digital radio/IBOC technology is designed to fill those no-man's land spaces with digital versions of the analog corporate stations that already dominate the airwaves! The National Association of Broadcasters, the most powerful business and lobbyist group in Washington, D.C., pushed vehemently to get this technology passed (and these are the same folks who lobbied Congress to keep first, second, and third-adjacent channels empty for fear of "interference"). No longer does the old argument of "limited bandwidth" hold much weight. For large stations, the digital transition offers one more chance to block competition on the airwaves and gain a huge windfall in profit making.

Who are the companies that stand to profit with the change to digital radio? On July 12, 2000, USA Digital Radio and Lucent Digital merged to become iBiquity Digital Corporation. iBiquity Digital is

the major developer of the hardware and software necessary to make digital radio a reality. iBiquity Digital's investor group, also major supporters of digital radio/IBOC, reads like a who's who of radio broadcasting corporations: Clear Channel Communications, AMFM (now wholly merged with Clear Channel!), ABC, Bonneville International, and Citadel Communications.

Now for a bit of argument: Why should you care about digital radio? How does the commercial stranglehold on the airwaves matter to you in your daily life and in the foreseeable future? Here's a few reasons:

1) Corporate radio kills the little guys. As we've already said, digital radio will crowd the airwaves so completely, and create such an old boys' network in the legislative trenches, that independent, community radio stations setting up shop will be a thing of the past. So no more venues for independent bands that aren't part of the new payola system (to learn much, much more see [http://archive.salon.com/ent/clear\\_channel/](http://archive.salon.com/ent/clear_channel/)). Every time you hear that Christina Aguilera single though, you'll be able to click somewhere on your radio to buy that CD!

2) Corporate radio will keep you and your friends off the air. Are you an independent DJ? Or someone working for a commercial station? Clear Channel, the largest owner of radio stations in the United States and a heavy supporter of digital radio, has the charming practice of buying mid-sized regional stations and firing the engineers and broadcast personnel. They then replace these live, local deejays with canned voices — deejays working in a radio factory on the other side of the country, recording promos, traffic reports, weather, introductions, and "local color" for a station they might never even see. This new assembly line system of producing radio is called "voice tracking." You'll be flipping burgers while a guy from San Antonio talks about the clubs you used to visit.

What can you do about it? Activists across the country are teaming up to fight the FCC on this and related issues, and, for the first time, targeting media conglomerates as the producers of poor quality dreck. Last September, Prometheus activists worked with the Media Alliance in San Francisco to invade the National Association of Broadcasters convention in Seattle, and presented a spoof of Clear Channel's voice tracking in the form of their own "new company," Cheap Channel Radio! They amused hundreds of exhibitioners and angered journalists, corporate presenters, and Seattle police. Visit their effort at <http://www.cheapchannelradio.com>, where you can build your own voice-tracked station.

You can also visit the Prometheus web site, at <http://www.prometheusradio.org>, to learn about how to start your own radio station in defiance of this commercial stranglehold. A great archive of corporate media news is found at <http://www.clearchannelsucks.org>, and the projects of the Media Alliance is at <http://www.media-alliance.org>. The scruffy Prometheans and their brethren are not giving up the fight to shake some sense into the FCC! And they (we) could use your help.

Your friends and neighbors sending out their own music and news? Or a digital hearth in every home, bringing you the McDonald's of broadcasting? The scruffy Prometheans and their brethren are not giving up the fight to shake some sense into our legislators! And they (we) could use your help. ★

*For more information about Prometheus, digital radio, and corporate encroachment onto your airwaves, you can also call 215.727.9620.*

# The Future of TAO

TAO (The Anarchist Organization) has had a number of projects associated with it, such as the Direct Action Media Network (DAMN) and A-Infos. TAO has provided coverage of anti-capitalist and anti-war struggles and has provided services to members who share political affinity with them and their project, operating as a shared infrastructure resource for their political allies. TAO has strived to create knowledge through independent public interest research, distribute it freely through participatory education and advocate worker-owned and operated autonomous zones — while operating against capital or market-regulated forms of political, economic and cultural organization and towards socially just, ecologically sound, international liberation.

But TAO has never truly been a federation of autonomous collectives, although it has been described and imagined as such. According to Megan from the Resist! Collective (formerly the Vancouver TAO chapter), TAO was originally founded on the concept of being a federation of collectives — the idea being that TAO collectives would form all over the place and share labor, distribute resources and encourage communications and autonomy in the areas in which it operated. "Unfortunately that hasn't really happened, though TAO has partnered with other projects like it to share knowledge and resources. Currently TAO has one collective in Toronto that does a lot of the day to day TAO work, and a few other TAO workers live outside of Toronto who participate in the work." Through a members' survey, the collective has noted that most members do not participate, and many do not even know how to get involved.

Lack of participation has not been the only problem the TAO collective has dealt with. TAO has also consistently had trouble pulling money together for rent, and has operated for six years on mostly volunteer labor by a workers' collective. Much of the equipment is donated, and is quite outdated.

TAO is therefore restructuring from a system that provides services to comrades towards a working group structure with a fair, sliding scale dues-based membership. The move will be geared towards an open learning environment where members can participate and working groups will provide accessible documentation and openly published budgets. Members will make economic and labor commitments to the organization, and the organization will commit to provide access to the skills and learning environment to members. This system will enable members to take responsibility and participate fully in the development of the organization as a whole and to plug into organized working groups to learn the skills necessary to help with the maintenance work. Membership dues will cover the maintenance of facilities such as bandwidth, phones, hardware and electricity, and labor. This move will lead towards members sharing not only resources, but also decision-making and involvement. TAO is still committed to broad access to their facilities to those they consider political allies, regardless of their economic situation.

TAO is also working towards developing relations with existing radical tech-media groups and organizations in order to obtain support and mutual aid and to focus the scope of their organization.

With this rebirth, TAO is tentatively changing their name to OAT (Organization of Autonomous Telecoms). To stay informed about Tao's changing status and current activities, subscribe to their announce list by sending an e-mail to [lists@tao.ca](mailto:lists@tao.ca) with the command "subscribe announce" in the body of the message.

-Yael Grauer



How Product Reviews Whet Our Appetite for Shit We Don't Need

# A Memoir of Dark Obsession

words John Konsumer art Helen Griffin

I am an informed consumer. It's safe to say no one I know is more knowledgeable about overpriced consumer electronics. But despite the fact that I know better, and have some kind of radical analysis, I still salivate at the prospect of having my own 20 gigabyte MP3 player. This is my story — a story of how someone who should know better became obsessed with buying shit he doesn't need. My identity will remain secret so I can try to scam free products from electronics companies.

## Crouching consumer, hidden geek

I started reading *Consumer Reports* as a kid in suburban V\_\_\_\_\_. I liked the magazine's reviews of everything from household appliances to ice cream and four-door sedans. *CR* took no advertisements of any sort, its tests were punishing and its reviews often scathing; a bad review was sometimes accompanied with a directive to the appropriate government agency to recall a product ("The heads of 'Battlin' Bonobos' came off in all of our tests, resulting in a choking hazard for children under three.") And the drama! Often, the highest-priced product turned out to be the lowest quality, and there was usually a "best value" that was about as good as the very best, but at half the cost. Also, I didn't date much.

Along with knowing all about which brand of chocolate was the best, I *knew* I knew which brand of chocolate was the best. This, I feel, is a one-two punch of product reviews: information and a smug feeling of superiority. But at least I could see it coming. The most pervasive aspect of product reviews I didn't experience, and suffer, until much later.

## Much later

A few years later I'm temping at a bunch of different companies for a year and a half in the B\_\_\_A\_\_\_. I believe it's an evil industry, and only semi-coverly refuse to do any work. So when I'm not stealing office supplies or making personal calls, I'm surfing the internet. Or rather, while I'm stealing office supplies and making personal phone calls, I'm surfing the internet.

I grew up dialing up local electronic bulletin boards on the family computer — basically, the internet's dumb, ugly step-brother. The upshot was that I could stare at a monitor for hours on end, every day, just reading whatever I came across. This skill came in real handy in the world of temping.

But after a few months of surfing the web five hours daily I ran out. Ran out of old stories from the *Onion*; articles on infoshop.org; and high school crushed to google search (Katie Henderson, where are you?). I mean, reading the entire contents of the *New York Times*, *LA Times*, *Washington Post*, and *Indymedia* only took about three hours. I had to find another source of interesting news that was updated daily. Soon, a "friend" (Greg Michalec) turned me on to Slashdot: News for Nerds, Stuff that Matters, perhaps the most popular site for the computer-using cognoscenti.

I like learning about new and foreign cultures. Slashdotters, for example, are a simple people. I discovered, after surfing among them for a few hundred hours that their prime interests are:

1) Linux and open source software are good, Bill Gates is bad.

- 2) We really like high-tech gadgets.
- 3) Freeing Mumia and all political prisoners (not really).

After immersing myself in corporate media for two or three hours, I'd read the articles on Slashdot.org about a new distro of Linux ... and the new breed of Palm Pilots with Bluetooth connectivity. And like going down a Slip-and-Slide of childhood bad habits into the gravel driveway of grown-up addiction, I became obsessed with consumer electronics.

### I became obsessed with consumer electronics

Most people run into a problem trying to rationalize buying a new cell phone/personal digital assistant all in one: they can't. I had zero need for any of the scores of products I'd read about. I don't know what I would have done with them if I could've gotten them for free, which they weren't, which was my other problem: this stuff was really expensive.

Like a lost man wandering the desert under the cruel, hot sun, I developed fantasies around how I could satisfy my profound thirst. I'd read about how great a \$450 color Palm Pilot was and think, "Well, that means the next-best model will probably be \$350, and after Christmas that'll drop down to \$225." This was in July. And I still didn't need a Palm Pilot. There were other fantasies, too, around major donors, corporate sponsorship, and mugging yuppies.

I now realize the problem is in the reviews. First of all, there was no pretense of being as rigorous as the ones in my beloved *Consumer Reports*. And the web sites doing the reviewing would often have huge pop-up ads paid for by the company whose product they were reviewing, if not for that product itself. But I figured that if I took all that with

a grain of salt, I'd get a feel for how good the product really was.

What I didn't realize was that, by reading all these reviews, I was internalizing the values behind them. Reading a review for a new expensive digital camera assumed that there was at least one person on the planet who actually needed one. And when I cleverly did the mental math on how much one of these bad boys would hypothetically cost me, it never occurred to me to think about the environmental cost, or how little the person who actually did the work was paid.

The thing is, I would actually think about those costs when buying just about anything else. But by reading these reviews — written in the objective-I'm-a-reporter voice or as an enthusiastic tester — I programmed myself to see things from their perspective. Reading all those reviews made me a less critical consumer; all that information made me less informed. God knows what all that corporate media's done to me by now.

But hell, even knowing this, I still wanted my consumer electronics.

### Having your frapp and drinking it, too

At some point I remembered that I used to have the same problem with Starbucks Frappuccinos. Those sweet icy treats were as delicious as they were forbidden. But I realized that if I told the folks at a Starbucks that something was wrong with the "last Frappuccino I bought here," I'd get another one for free. Was there a similar ruse I could use to satisfy my need for high-tech boys' toys?

To this day I don't have an answer. I wish there was a way to get electronics companies to send me their products for free. And it'd be great to subvert the very product reviews that brainwashed me in the first place. ★

## REVIEW FREE MEDIA

**Five Days Over Seattle: An Audio Document of Free Radio Station Y2WTKO**  
 Cascadia Media Collective  
[www.cascadiamedia.org](http://www.cascadiamedia.org)



On Nov. 29, 1999, pirate radio station Y2WTKO took to the airwaves from a treetop perch on Washington's Olympic Peninsula. Its goal was to broadcast a street's eye view of the protests being staged against the World Trade Organization talks in Seattle.

Y2WTKO vanished from the radio dial five days later, just steps ahead of the FCC and other federal types. What it left behind amounts to a time capsule, a heady mix of rants, music, opinion and news that captures the experience of a major city shutting down under the combined voices of people determined to be heard.

Under the circumstances, the surprise is not the quality of *Five Days Over Seattle*, but that the team of guerrilla broadcasters managed to pull it off at all. There are only a couple of spots where pop, crackles and other glitches threaten to completely obscure the speakers. Most of the activists were experienced hands from Free Radio

Cascadia in Eugene, Ore. The CD's liner notes could be used as a how-to manual for those who would like to duplicate their efforts.

In the notes, "miscreant" described turning herself into a human broadcasting station disguised as a member of the press corp. A dual band VHF/UHF transceiver dangled under her long skirt while a flexible whip antenna poked up under her shirt to her armpit. Her shirt also concealed a tiny microphone and a push-to-talk button. The slick vinyl backpack: contained another antenna made especially for the occasion out of scratch materials.

Across Puget Sound, another team perched 65 feet up a hemlock tree. From their hilltop roost, crammed with transmitter, electronics, and survival gear, they pumped out a signal that could be heard as far south as Tacoma and into the eastern suburbs. The only serious shutdown came not from federal agents, but from Mother Nature who hammered the activists with enough high wind and driving rain to set a veteran treesitter's nerves on edge.

*Five Days Over Seattle* is more collage than narrative timeline. "Monsanto," a toe-tapping ditty about genetic manipulation and corporate profits, is sandwiched between a DJ skewering the mainstream coverage of police actions and a press

conference with the mayor and police chief. A KING 5 news report describing police tactics to move people off the street is overdubbed with the refrain, "rubber bullets."

The overall mix parallels the daily jumble of police action, political speech and protest marches that brought together locked out steelworkers with dreadlocked puppeteers.

When the station lost contact with its own crew, it shifted to live reports by Amy Goodman on Democracy Now, and shortwave news broadcasts on Radio Havana Cuba and Radio For Peace International. Anarchists, whose legitimacy was alternately dismissed or ignored in mainstream coverage, are included in the range of antiglobalization voices coming together.

If the collection has a shortcoming, it's the lack of international voices. Protesters converged on Seattle from around the world. My clearest memory involves a group of Korean farmers in white shirts and ties holding up their banner in support of French farm activist Jose Bove.

—Irene Svete

# SOLD DOWN THE RIVER

## Los Angeles and Cleveland Lose Alternative Weeklies to Closed-Door Consolidation

Before October 2002, Cleveland had two papers: the *Cleveland Free Times*, and rival, *Scene Magazine*.

On October 2, one week following the 10th Anniversary issue of the weekly *Cleveland Free Times*, Nick DiCarlo, CFO of parent company Village Voice Media (VVM), announced that as a result of a deal between VVM and rival alt-weekly chain New Times, Inc., *Free Times* assets had been sold, the paper was being disbanded, and staff should exit the premises.

In short, VVM agreed to shut down the *Free Times* and New Times agreed to shutter its paper in Los Angeles, ceding the territory to VVM's *LA Weekly*. The rumored buyout price for the New Times' Los Angeles holding was \$8 million.

Though the meeting apparently had been hastily called by *Free Times* Publisher Matt Fabyan, a New Times representative, Scott Tobias, was on hand to recruit suddenly jobless salespersons. Given the circumstances, it couldn't have been surprising.

Call it self-fulfilling prophecy: On June 12, 2002, Cleveland's *Scene* ran as its cover story a spurious tale called "Meltdown at the Cleveland Free Times — Years of Internal Combustion May Finally Drive the Paper Under." The article contained allegations from past *Free Times* editor Lisa Chamberlain, under whose watch "internal combustion" had indeed reached critical mass, culminating in what ultimately was a doomed union-organizing drive. This story was the first major public notice of direct competition between factions, which ended shortly thereafter as, in DiCarlo's words, "Investors got a great offer."

On Friday, October 11, 2002, Cleveland *Plain Dealer* media critic Tom Feran expressed it best: The battle between VVM and New Times "... ended up showing how much the alternative press has come to resemble bigger, more traditional media. ... They eventually could be one [chain], echoing the consolidation of other media."

Accordingly, David Schneiderman, CEO of VVM, told the *Los Angeles Times* that the "... transaction is consistent with the strategic direction of the company. We feel strongly about the markets we are in and will continue to grow the company." What once was a tradition espousing rational dialogue and reformation has been transformed into just another marketing strategy. Underlying that assumption is the subtle hint that Cleveland is not an attractive "market," as well as that "growing" a company concerns finance, plain and simple. *Free Times* Editor David Eden's commented, "We were being sold down the river. ... I think it's a turning point for alternative media."

In a city like Cleveland, the above is commonplace, given that the city is otherwise sinking out of sight behind vicious pretense. And that what masquerades as the "left" could so callously disregard its own mission had already been exposed by *Free Times* union-busting, which led to turnover of more than half the staff.

It's that way in American manufacturing, which, to much of a degree, no longer resides on these shores. It's that way in American radio, where entire "markets" (once these were called "cities") can be dominated by one company. In Cleveland, for example, Clear Channel Communications (which owns upwards of 1200 radio stations nationwide) owns six stations, along with over 1200 outdoor ad displays and the major concert promotion concern.

Selection among very few, poor choices doesn't promote diversity, but instead demeans substance and information. Over the past several years, publishing has continually streamlined itself in the rush to attract consumers. In-depth reporting and informative stories are bypassed in favor of news bits, blurbs, and hot topics. Not only alt-media, but such industry giants as *The New York Times* and *Rolling Stone* have publicly declared their intentions to pursue this direction.

It's just business, more dependent on the bottom line than on any principles of media involvement. It's as if the Internet Age of relativism — wherein all information is as valid as all other information by virtue of its existence — has encompassed more than what was ever deemed possible. Now, it seems, there's as little reason to pick a field of expertise for any particular endeavor as there is to choose between Coke or Pepsi.

Schneiderman's true colors are represented well by *The Village Voice's* own Cynthia Cotts in her "Press Clips" column. "The company could be sold tomorrow or in ten years," he says in response to the theory that VVM's ownership is merely playing with venture capital. "I'm here for as long as whoever owns it wants me here."

To this point, Eden adds his analysis: "The management philosophy of VVM is making money for [its] investors, period."

That's inarguable. Village Voice Media is a holding company created by investment equity group Weiss, Peck & Greer when the firm purchased Stern Publishing in 2000; numbered among Weiss, Peck & Greer's corporate partners is the \$1 billion-plus Trimaran Fund. (Meanwhile, New Times, Inc. not only owns a dozen alt-weeklies, but also the Ruxton advertising group.)

As Feran pointed out, the party lines keep consolidating. In the October 14, 2002 *Plain Dealer*, *Scene* Editor Pete Kotz dismisses the *Free Times* as "local morons" unworthy of a job at his august journal. Perhaps the greater sin lies in being "local." In any case, this enlightening statement implies that

not bowing to business pressures makes one less intelligent. But in Cleveland (rated by Clear Channel to be the 13<sup>th</sup> largest consumer market in the U.S.) where the publishing realm is practically nonexistent beyond the Advance/Newhouse group (which owns both the daily *Plain Dealer* and the *Sun* chain of suburban weekly newspapers) it's especially damning. *Scene* and the *Free Times* had traded employees back and forth for years.

Though Cleveland could take heart in the fact that it was traded for Los Angeles, the occurrence underscores a national crisis — that what the "market" demands is more important than what a "city" needs or wants. *The Plain Dealer's* rather ironic comment that "free enterprise had closed the publication" was just another entry on the daily's long list of missed opportunities to comment on Cleveland's forced march into a morass of "redefinition" on behalf of its leadership.

Little dialogue is possible in Cleveland. The paper of record is a sworn friend and protector of business interests. Meanwhile, *Scene*, with no competition (and, given this deal, touted as the inevitable outcome of market forces and engineering, with no guarantee of longevity) will certainly not improve upon its lowest-common-denominator entertainment coverage. Profits are profits, and Cleveland can't necessarily continue to support even one weekly.

Now what? In the words of Roldo Bartimole, a 30-year veteran muckraker and civic antagonist who in the final issue of the *Free Times* was lauded for lifetime achievement by the Society of Professional Journalists, "less information for Clevelanders, badly in need of insight into community matters."

With the national focus on marketing identity, and convenience in commerce, the very idea of "community," it seems, lacks only a price tag. ★

by Matt Kuchna





When I switched to Linux last month, I said I hoped to someday become the world's number one Linux cheerleader. This was sort of misquoted, and I've read in numerous places that I proclaimed myself "The world's number one Linux cheerleader," which has caused me a little bit of grief. I mean, I can't consider myself the world's number 6000 Linux cheerleader if I haven't even recompiled a kernel yet, or built a LAN... but I'm working on it.

I entered a Brave New World with a little trepidation and a great sense of excitement as well. As I wrote back then, "*The Open Source movement really appeals to my anarchistic and individualistic tendencies, and everyone I know who uses Linux tells me that I won't miss Windows at all. I don't really use any software that's windows-specific, except Dreamweaver, and I'm told that I can run that under WINE, or find a comparable OS editor.*"

Since then, I've discovered Quanta and Scream which are fine replacements for Dreamweaver, and the only time I ever miss Windows is when I get the urge to play some games...but a quick trip to the PS2 takes care of that until I can upgrade this machine with more RAM and a big old video card so I can run WineX 2.1.

Before I get to the details, I should address something that I think everyone who makes the switch feels: Fear.

We feel afraid because even though we're pretty sure that everything is going to work out fine, we've existed on a steady diet of FUD for many years. Maybe we tried to install a distro a few years ago, when Linux wasn't as newbie-friendly as it is now. Maybe we're just a bunch of pussies.

I'll admit it: I was nervous. Nervous that I was going to do this install, and my magical connection to the largest library of free porn on the planet would cease to exist. I was nervous that I wouldn't be able to use a word processor that was as reliable as MS Word had always been.

I was nervous, but also excited. Excited that I was taking the first step towards joining a global movement based on ideals with which I strongly agreed. I was excited because if a lameass like me could make Linux work, that would dispel a great deal of FUD, and maybe empower some people who, like me, suspected that they could live MS-free, but weren't sure if they could hack it. ("Hack it." Har.) I was excited because I felt like I was taking a chance, accepting a risk, and anticipating great rewards.

And I had a hole card. If I managed to completely break everything, I knew that I would be able to format the drive, reinstall the old OS, and wait for a LUG install party.

## Install

The install was shockingly simple: Open the CD-ROM, shut down the machine, turn the machine back on, wait for the Mandrake screen to appear, hit return, watch the fun.

This nice, friendly, graphical install is perfect for newbies. Mandrake asked me if I wanted to use an existing partition, or wipe the whole drive. I opted to format the whole drive, let Mandrake build

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I thought, "Hmmm ... 'Administer Your System,' eh? Okay, I'll take a look."

Sitting in that menu were options like "Add or remove programs, Configure Gnome," and "Download and install Mandrake security updates."

Ah-hah! I clicked on "Download Mandrake security updates," and followed the prompts. This started a really cool "Mandrake Update" utility, which is sort of like a non-intrusive version of Windows Update. I was presented with three options: bug fixes, normal updates, and security updates. I selected all three, and clicked "install," eager to watch... the damn thing spin.

I realized that the reason the install had hung the first time was related to this spinning... the default update site wasn't responding. I guess there was no timeout set for the normal Mandrake install, which is why it hung before. Far be it from me to tell Mandrake how to do things, but this seems pretty silly to me. A simple "Site isn't available now, but here's your system anyway, Jerky." message would have been nice. Fortunately this time I was able to just cancel the connection, define a different source, and about 20 minutes later my system was up to date.

I spent the rest of the next hour or so exploring the system.

## Getting Comfortable

I was eager to make the switch to Linux because mostly I use my computer for 3 things:

- Internet
- Email
- Word Processing

I had done lots of research about Linux, and the impression I had gotten was that if your primary computer use was for these three things, the only thing you'd miss about Windows was the daily reboot.

Let's take a look.

### Internet

The browser that ships with Gnome 1.4 is called "Galeon." It's based on Gecko, from Mozilla, and it's really, really cool. I'm using the latest Mozilla build more and more, but as soon as Galeon catches up with Moz, I'll probably be back with Galeon, for the bookmark editing alone! Although many people's experiences with Linux will surely vary, I can say without a doubt that once you use Galeon or Mozilla, you'll be stunned that you ever liked IE. The KDE desktop has it's own browser also, called Konqueror, but I really don't like it as much as I like Galeon or Mozilla...but anything is better than IE, and you can quote me on that.

### Email

Back when I was new to the Internet, and I was getting dial-up shell access from Netcom, there wasn't such a thing as the World Wide Web, unless you were on a connection fast enough to use NCSA Mosaic. Since the 'net was just text back then, I used it for MUDding

address, and built my network connection for me. This entire process took about 3 minutes.

Somewhere in there Mandrake auto-detected my printer, too. The only thing I had to tell it on my own was that my mouse had a wheel!

Finally, I got to a screen where I was asked if I wanted to check for updates to the packages I'd installed. I said "yes," and walked away to get a drink of water. When I came back a few minutes later, nothing had changed... so I sat down to play some GTA3 while it continued downloading. About 30 minutes later, nothing had changed, and my hard disk had spun down.

This wasn't a good sign. All that excitement I'd been feeling was completely overwhelmed by the nervousness I'd had, and I felt some panic beginning to rise.

I cursed, kicked, gnashed and paced.

I decided to start over, and when I got to the "do you want to upgrade?" part, I said no. The install finished perfectly this time. I restarted the machine, and was logged into Gnome in about 2 minutes.

## First Time

I was immediately impressed with the spiffy desktop. It was enough like Windows to give a sense of familiarity without making me feel like I was running some oddball derivative of W2K.

I poked around the menus for a little bit, and was drawn to a menu which said, "What to do?"

What a great question! This was exactly what I was wondering, and here was a friendly menu to help me out. It contained sub-menus like, "Enjoy Music and Video," and "Use Office Tools." There was also "Use the Internet," and "Administer Your System."



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the partitions for me, and get on with the install. A few minutes later, I got a screen where I was asked what packages I wanted to install.

I was presented with a very easy to understand screen, where I could select options like "Game Station," "Server," "Office," and the like. It asked if I wanted to run services like FTP, SSH, and a firewall. Finally, I was given the opportunity to choose which desktop environment I wanted. I chose both KDE and Gnome, because I knew from previous experience that there were apps from both environments that I liked.

After selecting my packages, I swapped some CDs, added some users, set some passwords, and got to the part that really had me the most afraid: configuring the network so I could get online.

The last time I tried Linux, it was Red Hat 5.2 and I was on dial-up. Getting that bastard to connect was about as easy as getting laid in a convent. There were all these config files I had to edit, and all these strange text commands I had to type in, just to get the modem to turn on... getting it to connect was another problem entirely. For someone who was coming from Windows 95, this song-and-dance to get connected was simply unacceptable, and ultimately it was the main factor which drove me back to Windows.

Boy have we come a long way, baby! Mandrake did this super-cool auto-detection, where it found my NIC, used DHCP to get my IP address, and built my network connection for me. This entire process took about 3 minutes.

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The browser that ships with Gnome 1.4 is called "Galeon." It's based on Gecko, from Mozilla, and it's really, really cool. I'm using the latest Mozilla build more and more, but as soon as Galeon catches up with Moz, I'll probably be back with Galeon, for the bookmark editing alone! Although many people's experiences with Linux will surely vary, I can say without a doubt that once you use Galeon or Mozilla, you'll be stunned that you ever liked IE. The KDE desktop has it's own browser also, called Konqueror, but I really don't like it as much as I like Galeon or Mozilla...but anything is better than IE, and you can quote me on that.

### Email

Back when I was new to the Internet, and I was getting dial-up shell access from Netcom, there wasn't such a thing as the World Wide Web, unless you were on a connection fast enough to use NCSA Mosaic. Since the 'net was just text back then, I used it for MUDDing

(just say no, people!), IRCing (mmm...floodbots) and email. The email client I used was called Pine, and it still ships with Linux. I really liked Pine. It was easy to understand and use, even if you were a lamer like me, and I still use it from time to time today.

However, since the Internet is bigger and badder these days, people want bigger and badder email clients, and Linux is happy to oblige. When I was running Windows, I used Eudora, because I hated Outlook's interface and I've always felt that Outlook's handling of email is secondary to its primary purpose: spreading worms and virii. Now look, I'm not cracking on Outlook users, okay? As a matter of fact, I wrote a great new game just for Outlook users! It is my first try. I wish you would like it.

Seriously, if you like Outlook, you can use a Linux client called "Evolution" from Ximian. It has all of the things you like about Outlook, a better summary screen, and a really cool calendar. It will interface with your Pilot, and it won't spread worms and virii like Outlook. You can even set up the summary page to load headlines from WWDN, and see if I've gotten off my lazy ass to update the site recently. Personally, I use KMail, which is part of the KDE desktop. Although I am primarily a Gnome user, KDE has numerous features I like, including the calendar, the tea-timer (a silly little applet that sits in your panel, which is the Linux equivalent of the taskbar,) and KMail. KMail is a mail client which is much lighter than Evolution. KMail looks and feels a lot like Eudora to me, handles filters the same way, and deals with different accounts and protocols nicely. Both solutions are very, very easy to install and configure, and if you know things like your POP server, SMTP server and stuff, it's certainly no more difficult than the other clients available for Windows or Mac.

Mozilla also has it's own email client, but I haven't used it. I'm sure that, just like everything else Mozilla does, it's really cool.

**Word Processing**

This is a place where the FUD really has a firm hold. They'd have you believe that things you author on Linux won't be readable by Word, with the converse also being true.

Well, it's simply not true. At G4, everything is written using Word. I do most of my writing from home because it's easier to concentrate in my quiet home office, and I was worried that I wouldn't be able to send files to work if I authored them under Linux. Well, I haven't had

a single problem. I have written 6 episodes since making the switch, and turned in countless rewrites, and the conversion from OpenOffice to Word is seamless.

Mandrake ships with StarOffice, which is put out by Sun Microsystems. It's a very nice alternative to Word. Each time I looked, StarOffice had the familiar Word command, or it's equivalent. The only thing I had trouble with was tables. It was grumpy about having a table wrap to the next page, a problem I also encountered in OpenOffice. A few tweaks in the preferences solved this mildly annoying problem.

Having said all that about StarOffice, I don't use it. I prefer OpenOffice, from OpenOffice.org. In my experience, it loads faster than StarOffice, and I just like the interface better. It doesn't come standard with Mandrake 8.2, but it's easily downloaded and installed, and can be set as a default word processing application with minimal effort.

**Freedom of Choice**

These three examples bring up a very important distinction which sets Linux apart from Windows: You are not limited to one word processor, or one desktop environment, or a small set of applications.

Linux is all about choice, and putting the power to make decisions about the computing experience into the hands of the users. If you're anything like me, you'll

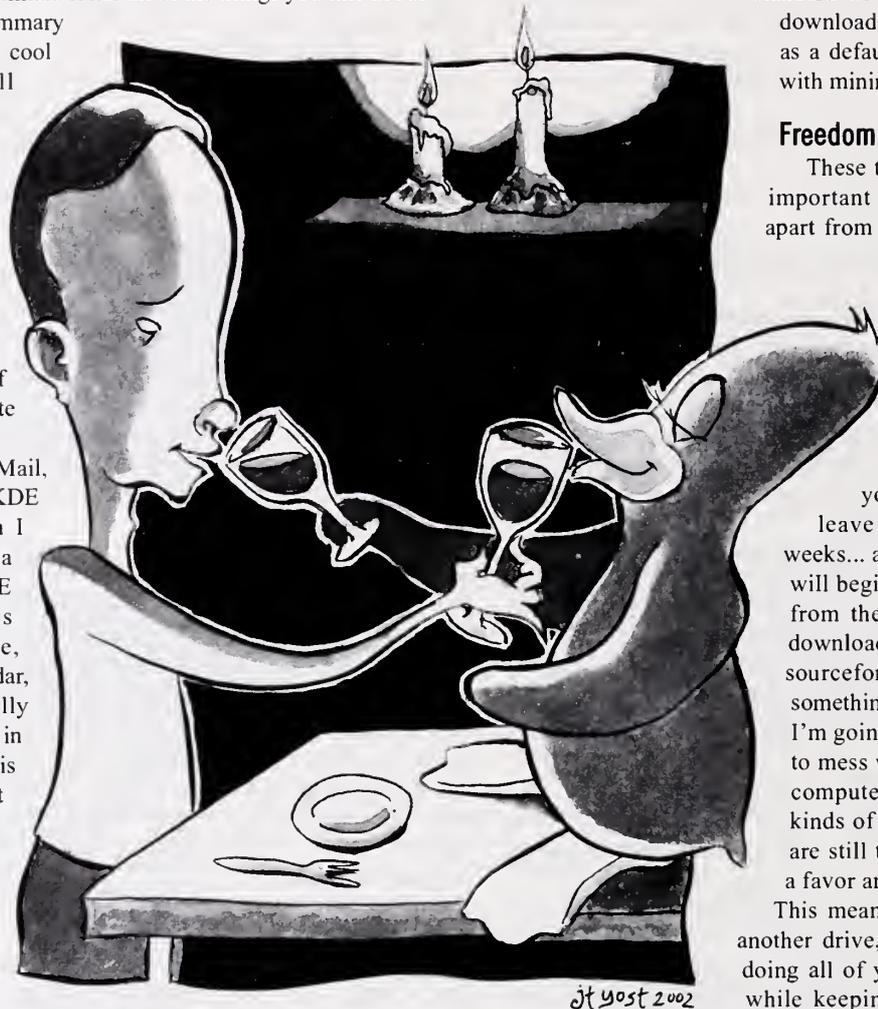
leave all the defaults for about 2 weeks... and then the tweaking of things will begin: adding and removing things from the panel... moving the panel... downloading things from freshmeat and sourceforge... and inevitably breaking something. Here is the only real "advice" I'm going to give the reader: If you like to mess with the nuts and bolts of your computer, and you like to try out all kinds of new programs and toys which are still technically "beta," do yourself a favor and set up a "development" box.

This means investing 50 bucks or so in another drive, and putting Linux on it, and doing all of your fixing and breaking in it, while keeping your main install safe and reliable.

**Day to day use**

Some people will suggest new users do what's called a "dual boot" system, where you keep your Windows environment on one partition, and run your Linux partition on another. The advantage of this is that if you mess something up in Linux, you can use your Windows install to get online and get help. It also means that you can access some Windows features through Linux, which is important for some people. The disadvantage of this is that having the "crutch" of Windows will prevent many users from fully enjoying everything Linux has to offer.

When I switched, I did it 100 percent and I haven't looked back since. I am really glad that I did it this way, because I've learned something new each day, and grown more secure in my abilities to administer my system. I'd suggest that, unless you're a hardcore gamer, you do the same.



Jt Gost 2002

## Which Distro Is Best?

There are numerous holy wars about Gnome v. KDE, Mandrake v. Red Hat, Red Hat v. Debian, Debian v. Slackware... it goes on and on, and I won't take a side in these wars. Instead, I will say what I always say about computers: The operating system for you is the one that works best for you. If that's Windows, or Mac, or even an Atari 800, go nuts. I think that this holds true for Linux, as well. The distro which is "best" is the one that works best for you. Over time, what is "best" for you will probably change, and maybe you'll want to change your distro. Right now, I'm using Mandrake 8.2, and I'm excitedly looking forward to 9.0, which should be out very soon. Maybe someday I'll switch to something else...but that's the beauty of Linux... you get to choose for yourself what you want to use, instead of having The Borg choose for you.

## Okay! I'll switch! Get off my back! Now what?

Well, for the Newbies, I suggest something with a very easy install, and good community support. I have found this in both Red Hat and Mandrake, which is not to say that it doesn't exist elsewhere. I just know about the support for Mandrake and Red Hat first hand.

Once you're up and running, join a Linux User Group, where you can get help with problems, answers to questions, and a warm fuzzy feeling that comes from being around people who are nerdier than you are. You will also learn very quickly to love the O'Reilly

publishing company. Their Linux books are nothing less than required reading for getting the most out of your system.

## Finally...

There is a lot of specific information I've left out here... I didn't talk about games because I don't play games on this box. I didn't talk about Spreadsheets because I don't use them, either. But I know that you can do both under Linux. Try Google for some examples. There is also a really cool desktop environment which Ximian makes, built on top of Gnome. I've used it, and found it to be really, really cool.

I have had a few problems, which I try to view as challenges. Most notably, I couldn't get audio to work on this machine... but a quick call for help online yielded the answer to the challenge in about 15 minutes. I currently can't get this box to see my router, but I'm closing in on a solution to that problem daily.

## One Of Us

I will close with what I think is the best benefit from running Linux: when you run Linux, you join a community which is global, and ever-growing. This community is self-sustaining, nurturing, and always welcoming in new members. How much you get out of this community depends on how much you put into it, and it is very rewarding, indeed.

Come on in... there's always room for one more. ★

# FREE LONG DISTANCE REVIEW

## Kenwood FreeTalk XLS (TK-3131)

available from a myriad online retailers ranging approximately \$129 - \$199

Thinking back on the Seattle WTO protests, there is only one thing that can compete with the memories of lockdowns, property destruction, and the intoxicating sense of victory: the gear. Few of us had cell phones; who could forget Nextel cell phones that could also, walkie talkie-style, coordinate a flying squad of bicycling blockaders from across the city? It was my first exposure to activist groups using communication equipment in an organized manner. And when I was struck with explosive diarrhea after the first day of actions, I got to hang around the convergence space and do "security" with the kid-brother of the Nextel, a Family Radio Service (FRS) walkie-talkie, or "radio."

The FRS was no kids' toy. They could allegedly transmit up to two miles away, and even the fragile, awkward looking one I had (a Kenwood, if I recall) probably cost a hundred bucks. And if in reality they could only transmit a couple blocks in an urban environment, who was gonna complain? These Kenwoods (and the flashier Motorola versions) at least let everyone in the building communicate with each other. The alternative was a choice between shouting and a complex array of pneumatic tubes.

Three years later, the Kenwood FreeTalk XLS gets it right. The man who did PR for Kenwood radios, Torin Roher, cheerfully described it as "an FRS on steroids." It's smaller, more powerful, and offers way, way more features than its forebears.

Let's start with the power. I'll never forget when my pal Josh and I couldn't find each other in the same march against police brutality with our Motorola FRS radios. The ugly reality is that those things could transmit two miles like Bill Clinton was a socialist president. Since FRS radios have become so cheap and popular, there's often a lot of chatter on any FRS channel, a real headache if you need to keep in contact with your comrades.

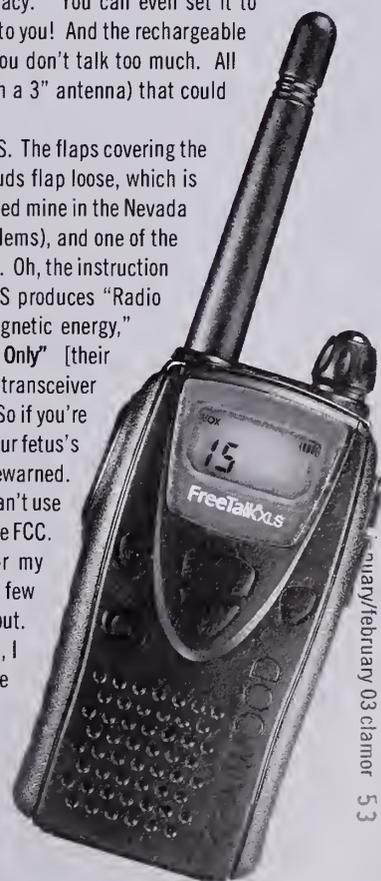
The FreeTalk XLS's secret is that it broadcasts on the General Mobile Radio Service (GMRS) frequencies. The government allows higher-powered transmitting on those frequencies. According to the instruction book, you can reach up to four miles in a clear environment. In my own tests, I could communicate about a mile around downtown Oakland. As well, the FreeTalk XLS can be set to transmit on FRS frequencies, where it transmits at regular FRS power levels. I used the FreeTalk XLSKenwood was kind enough to send me with regular FRS radios and experienced no problems.

These bad boys are also packed with features: You have 7 FRS channels and 8 more GMRS channels, each with 83 privacy channels. You can transmit at low power — even when using GMRS channels — to save power. There's even a funky "privacy" option that scrambles your speech to all but other FreeTalk XLS users set to "privacy." You can even set it to vibrate when someone's transmitting to you! And the rechargeable NiCad batteries can last for days if you don't talk too much. All this in a compact 4"x2"x1" body (with a 3" antenna) that could easily get lost in a cargo pocket.

I have some quibbles with my XLS. The flaps covering the plugs for optional headsets and earbuds flap loose, which is irritating more than anything else (I used mine in the Nevada desert for three days without any problems), and one of the radios wouldn't transmit until I reset it. Oh, the instruction book also warns that the FreeTalk XLS produces "Radio Frequency (RF) energy and electromagnetic energy," and is classified as "Occupational Use Only" [their bold text]. That means you can use the transceiver only if you are aware of the hazards." So if you're thinking about using this to transmit your fetus's kicking sounds to your partner, be forewarned.

One more thing: You technically can't use a GMRS radio without a license from the FCC. *Clamor* was kind enough to pay for my application, which was \$75 and took a few hours and a few phone calls to figure out. Three weeks from the time I sent it out, I got my "license" (a slip of paper) in the mail. But I don't think anyone will be asking to see your license if you want to take a couple of these radios out for a spin on your next action.

-Dan Spalding





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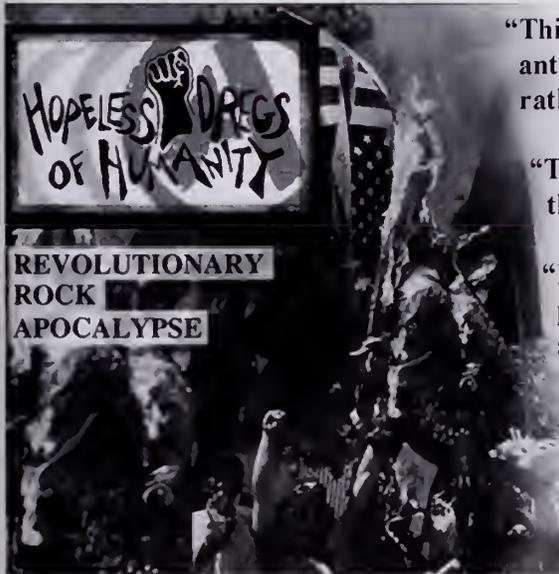
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**The Fight Over  
the Last Place**

# A major land use struggle is being waged over one of the least hospitable tracts of land on Earth.

Sunday mornings the sandy streets of Qaanaaq, Greenland are deserted. Enormous petrol tanks stand in the dim light, huskies lie curled next to brightly colored houses, and department store-sized icebergs float silently out to sea. Qaanaaq, the second most Northernly town in the world, is framed on one side by scree strewn mountains and on the other by an ominous and freezing sea. Unlikely as it sounds, a major land use struggle is being waged here over one of the least hospitable tracts of land on Earth. Despite the harsh weather and frozen landscape nearby, Dundas Mountain has become a symbol for native land rights, environmental justice, and government accountability. Dundas itself, a striking flat topped mountain, and the surrounding hunting grounds, are the traditional home to the Inughuit, as the local Inuit call themselves. This changed abruptly in 1953 when the United States government, in secret negotiations with Denmark (the political administrator of Greenland), began building an Air Force base on the land and evicted the native population, laughably citing "security concerns" as the basis for the forced move. Nearly 50 years later, the displaced Inughuit and their descendents have begun fighting to get their land back. By utilizing many of the hallmarks of democracy — freedom of information, freedom of the press, and the right to sue the government — the Inughuit land struggle is offering hope for indigenous groups worldwide.

Ask any one of Qaanaaq's 650 inhabitants about the Thule Air Force base and they are bound to have a story. For a few the base is a source of employment, they have sisters or cousins who have found work there. For many it is a nearby airport which, until recently, supported all commercial as well as military travel in the area. For other people the base is a source of stories which are sad, marked with loss, and told in faraway voices. In May of 1953, the 250 native inhabitants of Dundas were given four days eviction notice, forced to pack and move (by dog sled) to remote settlements 100 miles to the north. Navarana Sorensen, who was six at the time, recalls, "My father stopped the sled just before we could not see Dundas Mountain anymore and my parents were just looking back. I had never seen them with tears in their eyes before." As compensation for the move the Danish government promised new homes to the Dundas residents, despite the fact that the dwellings were 40 kilometres (24 miles) more distant to the walrus hunting grounds. Sadly, when the hunters and their families arrived in Qaanaaq, Herbert Island, and other relocation

settlements, the new houses failed to materialize. Magssanguaq Jensen, who was 27 in 1953, was forced to sleep in a tent with his wife and child from May until September while his home was being constructed. When frost began to cover the tent they were "allowed" to move inside, even though the home was incomplete and unfurnished. That fall a storm pitched Jensen's house, which was not attached to a foundation, onto its roof, forcing Jensen and his family to move yet again, this time into a neighbor's already overcrowded home.

The loss of their home at Dundas means more to the Inughuit than a change of address and longer commute. As a society that has subsisted on the hunting for thousands of years, giving up a rich hunting ground and traveling to less familiar territory was a risky move. By relocating the natives, the Danish government effectively repealed the Inughuit right to food and sold it to the American military. Navarana Sorensen explained how difficult the situation was: "In the spring we didn't have fresh meat for a long time because the ice was thin. We could not travel by dog sled and hunt, so our supplies were running very low. We had to ration everyday." The 1953 evacuation of Thule is an early example of a government trading the protection of its citizens for capital interests, a breakdown in democracy that today is occurring with alarming frequency. Not only was Dundas close to the walrus grounds but it was a place of geographical and historical significance as well. For centuries the local hunters had been attracted to Dundas because of its protected harbour and abundant land, particularly important in Greenland, 85 percent of which is covered with ice. When European and American explorers began arriving in Greenland at the end of the 1800s, the Thule area became the center of established trade between the cultures. As a permanent trading post developed, the normally semi-nomadic Inughuit began a semi-permanent residency, including building a church and cemetery. In four days, all of this — the food, the history, the cemetery, the homes, the trading post, the house of worship, the familiar ground — was gone.

To make matters worse, the Air Force base at Thule has had a dramatic and negative impact on the local environment: the waste from the base lies rotting and rusting in a dump, the noise has scared away the animals, and, worst of all, the United States Air Force lost an atomic bomb in the nearby sea. In blatant violation of their nuclear-free agreement with the Danish government, the United States kept

## on Earth

by Robert Biswas-Diener  
photos Andrew Stern

atomic weapons at their base at Thule. In January 1968, an American plane crashed on the frozen sea near Thule with three plutonium bombs aboard. The force of the impact triggered an explosion which spread the plutonium across the ice and snow. With bad weather on the horizon the American military brazenly enlisted the aid of the Inughuit for the cleanup effort. It was thought that the native people were the best qualified because they knew the area well and could build adequate temporary shelters at the cleanup site. One young Inughuit man told me that his father helped on the cleanup effort, and later developed painful lesions on his thighs. Years later it is unclear whether or not these injuries are the result of radiation, but it is a distinct possibility. One of the bombs was never recovered and a study conducted by the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP) shows that as much as 800 thousand square feet of sea water in the Dundas area showed "above normal" levels of radioactive pollutants for a full two years following the accident.

Although stories of hardship following the eviction are not uncommon among the Inughuit, their response to the exile is. In 1996, Uusaqqak Qujaukitsoq founded an organization to fight for the land. "We were treated in the worst way," Qujaukitsoq told through a translator, "When we were moved in 1953 my parents were depressed. I did not understand it at the time, but when I grew up I understood. I promised my father before he died that I would do something about it." Whether the group's name, Hingitaq 53, is translated as "exiled," "abandoned," or "discarded," their purpose is clear: to use the western legal system to regain their land from the Americans, hold the Danish government accountable for their actions, and fight to preserve the environmental health of their traditional lands. Representing nearly 500 people in the Thule/Qaanaaq area, Hingitaq 53 is an organization dedicated to using legal and democratic systems to affect change.

Using documents attained through the Danish equivalent of the Freedom of Information Act, Hingitaq 53 filed a lawsuit on the behalf of dozens of exiled Inughuit against the government of Denmark, for brokering the 1953 eviction. On August 20, 1999, the Eastern Danish High Court handed down an encouraging decision, mostly favoring the Inughuit. The Court agreed that too little warning had been given and that the move was "illegal." The Court further ordered collective compensation of a half a million Danish Kroners (about 70,000 dollars) and individual compensation of 15,000 Kroners (about 2,000 dollars, although actual compensation varied depending on age at time of eviction with children receiving less than adults). The residents of Qaanaaq, where prices are high and the average annual income hovers around 16,000 dollars, were not in a strong position to refuse the payment. Navarana Sorensen used the money to pay her electricity bill, telling me, "The money was in my hands for about 10 minutes. I went from the bank straight to the power company and paid them. I thought the payment should have been bigger." Although overall the court decision was highly favorable to the Inughuit, some plaintiffs felt it did not go far enough. Conspicuously absent from the ruling was the right to return to the land, a point central to the Hingitaq 53 movement. Despite the fact that the eviction had been found legally wanting, the Court waved off the Inughuit claim to the land with a single sentence: "In other respects the plaintiff's claims are dismissed."

Not to be discouraged, the members of Hingitaq 53 met with their lawyers and, less than a month after the High Court decision, launched an appeal, this time to the Danish Supreme Court. Uusaqqak Qujaukitsoq, president of Hingitaq 53, insists, "We want the land back; all of it. All the good hunting places are there. If we cannot hunt there [because of pollution] we want it cleaned up so that we can hunt again."



A decision on the appeal, according to Hingitaaq 53 attorney Christian Harlang, is expected sometime in 2003. Unwilling to be dependent on the Court's timetable, the Inughuit, showing both diplomacy and legal savvy, went to the United Nations Human Rights Commission to request that Denmark resolve all claims, and in an expedient manner. By redressing historical grievances through diplomatic and democratic means, the Inughuit have forced the international community to recognize the legitimacy of their claims. Further, in a world where indigenous groups often feel disenfranchised by government institutions, the Inughuit victory in the Danish High Court offers hope that justice, rather than politics, can prevail in such cases.

The Inughuit challenge comes at a critical time, shortly after the United States announced its intention to upgrade the radar system at Thule to a "star wars" class system. The National Missile Defence (NMD), or so-called "star wars," program is aimed at creating a sophisticated radar system capable of tracking and targeting enemy missiles in-flight. The location of the base at Thule, close to China, Russia, and North Korea makes it an ideal place for over-the-pole combat scenarios. Iko Opishima, a Japanese man married to an Inughuit woman, talked about NMD on the beach outside his home, "I think [National Missile Defence] is so crazy, that maybe it will destroy the Earth." Unfortunately for the U.S. government, the international community largely echoes Opishima's concerns. Russian officials are edgy about the recent withdrawal from the anti-ballistic missile treaty, a move that makes NMD possible, and even European allies fear a new arms race. The Inughuit are understandably worried about Qaanaaq, their new home, and its proximity to the air base (ground zero) in the event of a nuclear attack.

"Will the Americans protect us if there is a war?" asks Magssanguaq Jensen. "No. The air base will be one of the first places to be struck if they have star wars." These are fears shared by members of Greenpeace. A recent Greenpeace disarmament campaign has focused international attention on the region, a move that could help Hingitaaq 53 by giving the Inughuit another piece of ammunition for winning the sympathies of the international community. Coalition building of this type is one of the essentials of the democratic process, using information, communication, and mutual protest to enable disenfranchised groups to protect their rights.

Winning the right to return to their land would be an enormous victory for the Inughuit. Not only would it suggest the recognition of the legitimacy of their culture but it would be a milestone for the Danish government, protecting historically overlooked citizens. It is unclear, however, what might become of Dundas in the event of an Inughuit win. The walrus are long gone and the pollution has diminished its value as a hunting ground. But, it is a mistake to think of the Inughuit only as traditional hunters. They are, in fact, modern. They drink coffee, surf the internet, take photos, play soccer, and go to the grocery store. But, between playing bingo and broadcasting local radio they hunt, fish, and carve ivory. They have retained their relationship with the land, the animals, and the weather that play such a defining role in the austere arctic environment. They are modern

hunters, who have adapted their cultural history to contemporary realities. It is not uncommon, for example, to find Inughuit parents cutting up whale on the kitchen floor while the children watch the latest Hollywood release on DVD. For these people regaining a picturesque mountain, a protected harbour, an ancient burial ground, and perhaps an abandoned military installation is full of commercial, environmental, educational, recreational, and cultural possibilities.

The Inughuit find themselves in the unique position of being able to challenge a superpower and subvert a new global arms race. By spreading information through print and radio journalism they have been able to increase public awareness of the negative impact of American military overseas, both on indigenous culture and the

environment. The Inughuit use of democratic rights in fighting for justice is at the heart of what democracy is all about. Their expert use of media and their recent legal successes provide hope and inspiration for other indigenous groups. The political activism of Hingitaaq 53 is a call to arms, reminding all of us living in democratic societies that we have the tools, as well as the responsibility, to affect positive change. As Navarana Sorensen said one afternoon, "We were treated like we do not have rights, but we do have rights, so we can [use them] to prove that we have something important to say." ★

**Author's note:** "Thule" and "Dundas" are the same location, and the names are used interchangeably in this article.

**Further Reading:**

"The Danish Dilemma," by Jorgen Dragsdahl in *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*; Sept/Oct, 2001.

*The Last Kings of Thule* by Jean Malaurie (Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1956).

*The Right to Return: 50 Years of Struggle by Relocated Inughuit in Greenland* by Aqqaluk Lynn (International Circumpolar Conference Press, 2002).

**On the Web:**

*Inuit Circumpolar Conference (ICC)* - The ICC has NGO status with the United Nations. It is an international group representing the 150,000 Inuit living in Alaska, Canada, Greenland, and Russia.  
<http://www.inuit.org>

*Greenpeace Greenland Tour* - General site for Greenpeace, including information on disarmament, star wars, and a report on the tour of the MS Arctic Sunrise as it toured Greenland in an effort to promote debate about star wars. <http://www.greenpeace.org>

*Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights* - Treaties, history, and current news about human rights issues. Includes a special section on the rights of indigenous people. <http://www.unhcr.ch/>



The reach of corporate globalization is daunting. In the name of profit, governments, transnationals, and lending agencies implement policies and agendas that ridicule sovereignty, assault human rights, and desecrate natural resources. The fight often seems futile. Because the fight is so formidable, it is crucial to seek out scattered victories and visions of inspiration.

The people of Bougainville are such a vision.

Bougainville is a lush, vibrant green island located about 900 miles off the northern coast of Australia. Situated in the Solomon Island Archipelago, Bougainville has been under the control of Germany, the U.K., and Australia. It became a province of Papua New Guinea (PNG) when that country obtained independence from Australia in 1975.

At one time, Bougainville was a tropical paradise. But after copper deposits were discovered in the 1960s, Rio Tinto, one of the world's largest mining companies, moved onto the island with the help of the Australian riot police. After nearly two decades witnessing widespread environmental devastation and gross abuse of the natives' rights, the people of Bougainville fought back. In 1988, a group of landowners destroyed the mine's power source and it was shut down. With the monetary and military backing of Australia, the PNG government responded by sending troops onto the island, attacking

civilians, and driving the people out of their villages to seek refuge deep in the jungle. An air and sea military blockade was imposed, completely cutting off Bougainville from outside communication and resources like medicine and food.

After eight long years of conflict, the meagerly equipped Bougainville Revolutionary Army managed to successfully defeat the Australian-backed PNG troops. Out of a population of about 180,000, nearly 12,000 Bougainvilleans lost their lives. The survivors had endured nearly a decade isolated in remote jungle camps. With courage and creativity, the people of Bougainville united in a struggle to save their land and their culture from capitalist exploitation. And won.

The determination and ingenuity of the people of Bougainville is recorded in a documentary titled *An Evergreen Island* made by Australian filmmakers Mandy King and Fabio Cavidini. *Clamor* interviewed Mandy King about the film and their experiences on the island.

*Clamor: How did you first become interested in Bougainville and its people?*

**Mandy King:** In Australia, national television broadcast reports about the unique and bold actions of the Bougainvillean "rebels" who, after numerous unsuccessful efforts to get the mining company CRA, or Conzinc Riotinto

Australia (now called Rio Tinto), to negotiate compensation, blew up the power pylons supplying electricity to the mine. No one in the Pacific had defied a multinational before in such a challenging and effective a way.

It was an inspiring act in the sense that multinationals have a record of acting with impunity in developing countries, and this was the first successful act of its kind in the world. By blowing up the power pylons, the Bougainvilleans showed their intelligence and brilliant strategic thinking: the mine, situated in the mountains, was run solely on this power generated 12 miles away by turbines on the coast using sea water.

*What was Bougainville like before the copper mine? Why, after decades of occupation, did the copper mine prove to be the catalyst for the independence movement?*

Bougainville did contain the largest coconut plantation in the Pacific before and during the copper mine's existence. We believe the difference in the emergence of the independence movement lies in the issue of the scale of the environmental damage as well as employment practices at the mine: a majority of foreigners and mainland Papua New Guineans were employed. Also, the mine attracted many mainlanders who arrived and then didn't get work. They built squatter settlements and land disputes developed.

# EVERGREEN ISLAND



Rape and other social dysfunction arising out of the mine activity. This does not mean that all Bougainvilleans hate all mainlander Papua New Guineans. In fact, we were continually told of the great friendship that existed between them, especially the Bougainvilleans who studied in mainland Papua New Guinea where life long friendships were made.

So while there was that tension there, Australia was clearly seen as the responsible party regarding the war and the blockade. Australia aided the arming of the PNG Defense Forces, the supply of ships to enforce the sea blockade, the supply of helicopters and pilots to enforce the air blockade — helicopters used in gunship sorties against ordinary villagers.

Also, the Bougainvilleans had attempted (unsuccessfully) to claim independence in 1975. The mine had only been operating eight years at that stage. Australian influence made sure such an attempt was immediately and forcefully trampled; however following that uprising, Bougainville was granted a unique form of autonomy within Papua New Guinea.

*You mentioned that Bougainvilleans primarily held Australia responsible for the war and the blockade. Besides the wealth of copper, were there other natural resources Australia would have an interest in or was this partially another case of imperialism?*

Australia was the colonial power of Papua New Guinea until 1975. Before that time they declared, as the law dictates in Australia, that landholders only own the ground about six and a half feet down and land below that belongs to the Crown or the State to sell off, lease, or give to any mining corporation they see fit. I'm not entirely sure about the scale of other natural resource investment by Australians, however there certainly is a network of large coconut/copra plantations in Bougainville that belonged to expatriates, some of whom have German heritage also. Bougainville was part of both British and, previous to that, German imperial regimes. What was Australia's attitude toward the current and successful fight for independence? Australia has been flat out trying to kill off the independence movement in any way possible. Firstly through military means, by giving the PNG Government helicopters and patrol boats to maintain the total sea and air blockade. The PNGs could not fly the helicopters, so Australian and New Zealander mercenaries piloted them when they were used as helicopter gunships; a regular occurrence during the eight-year long blockade.

*How did the Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA), a group of landowners with minimal resources and untrained in fighting, organize such a successful force to drive back the PNG*

*army to the point of them relinquishing most of the island?*

An inherent aspect of the power of the BRA was that they were defending their own land. PNG is largely bankrupt and relies heavily on Australian aid, which doesn't often seem to filter down to the ordinary citizen, or in this case soldiers. The PNG army was underpaid, sometimes underfed, and demoralized. The BRA was led by a general who as a soldier was trained by the Australian Army. The BRA were able to utilize their technical know-how and use pieces of equipment left by the mining operation to make their own weapons. And they were very successful on a couple of notable occasions, at capturing large caches of PNG Defense Force (PNGDF) weapons and ammunition. One of these occasions ironically involved the cooperation of those Bougainvilleans armed by the PNGDF, a force known as the Resistance, to kill their fellow Bougainvilleans. The Resistance fighters were angry with the behavior of the PNGDF soldiers in that particular area and collaborated with the BRA in a cleverly strategized and highly successful ambush.

*In the beginning of An Evergreen Island, one Bougainvillean says, "War was like a university." Another person later describes the expression, "mekim na sarry," or making by doing, as a kind of island mantra. In what*

## A PEOPLE'S VICTORY



by Catherine Komp

ways did the people of Bougainville combine the measures of survival and determination acquired during the war with the limited resources needed to rebuild their villages under the economic embargo?

Ingenuity is unfortunately too often a phenomenon of need and something we in the West use far too little of generally. The Bougainvilleans sought the know-how and skills of their previous generations to rebuild their villages; so, there was in a sense a rebirth of traditional knowledge and techniques regarding building, medicine, etc. But they were also willing to adapt and incorporate PNG and Western education and skills into their blockaded situation. With the mini-hydro scheme to create electricity, the guy who coordinated the model we filmed had tertiary engineering training in PNG. But, the ingenuity was the adaptation of available machinery with a natural resource, fast flowing water, to produce power. He also referred to the daring and sometimes fatal outcome of youth testing for electric current using their tongues on the terminals.

The Bougainvilleans also created a process that turned fermented coconut oil into diesel fuel — a real inspiration. It's an extremely time consuming process involving a whole community, countless coconuts, and the few vehicles on the island, which by that time were complete rust buckets, with only the most rutted and potholed roads to encounter. But necessary for things like transporting the pigs for a wedding feast and the few white fellas who visited who found the walking very strenuous. All this was also only possible when the fighting has died down.

*Bougainville is a matrilineal society where women preside over the land. At one point of the film, a female Bougainvillean says,*

*"Women are the backbone of the country. Women brought peace during the conflict." Would you say that the matrilineal structure of Bougainville played a pivotal role in survival during the war, winning back the island, and rebuilding their communities?*

Women were primarily responsible for the food supply during the blockade; they maintained gardens often while they were on the move, where ever and however possible — a challenging task during a war. They took the major responsibility of looking after the family because the men were in the field. The women also took up a role in peace negotiations from an early stage. From 1997, they attended peace negotiations in New Zealand, despite the threat of attack when leaving and re-entering Bougainville, which was still under blockade. It was only in 1998 that the blockade was lifted.

*Another impressive undertaking is the education system installed by the Bougainvilleans in the rebuilding of their communities. The classes for both children and adults offered at the school and college seem quite thorough, providing for cultural education in the form of teaching the indigenous language to skills such as basket weaving to sustainable agriculture, even social courses to help deal with psychological aspects of the war. And all of this with, again, very limited resources. What was your impression of the education system?*

A total mind-blowing experience. Despite recent attacks, the tertiary arm of the education system in Central Bougainville had an extremely thorough written curriculum; staff were organized from the principal through to teachers in many different faculties. Clearly, courses could not be run smoothly because of the threat of helicopter attack (one

had only occurred a few months prior to our visit in June 1997). Social-psychological courses were being run where members of staff with those skills recognized the huge impacts of the war on their community, the devastating effect on family structures and relationships, particularly on youth. Primary education was running relatively well in many villages where parents and communities were required to build the classrooms and to volunteer as staff. Staff were desperate for paper and pencils because the demand for education was so strong. The concept of indigenous language learning for the primary school age children was a Bougainvillean initiative developed before the war and adopted throughout PNG.

*An Evergreen Island ends with some important questions on the future of Bougainville, including how the economy and community will develop. These issues seemed to hang on the larger question of independence. Since the island won sovereignty earlier this year, has the significance of these questions abated?*

Unlike East Timor, Bougainville has NOT won its sovereignty yet. It remains a part of Papua New Guinea with an "in principle" agreement that they will have an independence ballot in the next 10 to 15 years. And if they are as unlucky as the people of New Caledonia, that will be extended in 10 to 15 years' time. They have been awarded a form of autonomy that is not radically different from the situation they were in before the war.

*An Evergreen Island* had been shown in Australia and the U.K. but is largely unheard of in the U.S. To order a copy of the film, contact Video Education Australasia, 111A Mitchell Street, Bendigo, VIC 3550; phone (03) 5442 2433; fax (03) 5441 1148; [www.vea.com.au](http://www.vea.com.au).

## AUDIO REVIEW

**In A Pig's Eye: Reflections on the Police State, Repression, and Native America**

(Spoken Word 2-disc CD)

by Ward Churchill,

AK Press/Alternative Tentacles

[www.akpress.org](http://www.akpress.org)



run-of-the-mill FBI offices in the 1960's spent more than 70 percent of their yearly budgets hunting down draft dodgers and monitoring and repressing political activists, compared to the two percent spent investigating organized crime. Churchill turns the word "interrogate" on its face, to be used by activists and dissidents to ask the right questions about what the federal government's been telling us all these years. Churchill says that Ephram Zimbalist's television-friendly FBI never existed. He tells us the FBI's been identifying (and sometime, creating) left-wing organizations in order to preach about their dangers and justify brutal destruction.

Churchill, with Jim Vanderwall, analyzed and published the documents the FBI released after Freedom of Information Acts that revealed the details about the secret war against the Black Panthers, the U.S. Communist Party, the Puerto Rican Independence Movement, the Socialist Workers Party, and the New Left in *Agents of Repression* and *The COINTELPRO Papers*. *In A Pig's Eye* summarizes the dangerous character of the FBI through history, from the first incarnation of the federal police created in the 1860's to the repression and outright murder of and the anarchists of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century to the FBI's KKK involvement during the Civil Rights Movement to the political incarceration of Leonard Peltier. Churchill points out that the FBI labeled pacifist dissenters as "pacifist terrorists," a truly ridiculous oxymoron. In his talk as in his writings, Churchill interrogates the feds with their own documents and with their own admissions.

—Matthew L.M. Fletcher

He's introduced on the disc as one of the "survivors" of the American Indian Movement and the accompanying federal government repression. There's not too many of the old activists left with their credibility and freedom intact — Russell Means doing voices for Disney movies; Leonard Peltier still in federal prison. Churchill knows the power of the written word and the spoken word. Although it's not his language (it's the colonial language), he, like John Trudell, uses it effectively. Churchill's done the legwork and the research to qualify as the Indian Noam Chomsky. He's written the books and the articles with the research attached in hundreds of footnotes, done the talks, and stood up to the critics and racists.

With *In A Pig's Eye*, Churchill steps forward with the first blow against the word used to dominate, repress, and subjugate — the word — "interrogate." One of his persuasive tactics is to throw out a line as innocuous as, "The FBI exists to investigate federal crimes and catch the perpetrators." Churchill will then pause and say, "Let's interrogate that further." Then he'll go on to tell you about how the

# SOFTWARES

## the struggle for democracy in software

In late May 2002, a group called the Alexis de Tocqueville Institution used the magic “T” word in reference to Linux and other free software, announcing in a press release that “Terrorists trying to hack or disrupt U.S. computer networks might find it easier if the federal government attempts to switch to open source.”

Microsoft has long alleged that if you make your software source code available with open source or free software, outsiders will have an easier time finding ways to exploit your system. Free software advocates point out that malicious hackers will find security weaknesses regardless and releasing the source code makes it easier for friendly outsiders to discover flaws and develop fixes. Who is right? Well, the U.S. National Security Agency is working on a security-enhanced Linux, the German Defense Ministry relies on open source code, and a U.S. Department of Defense report said that limiting open source software, as Microsoft has pressured them to do, would have “strongly negative impacts” on security. Microsoft, which uses closed, proprietary software, has had numerous security flaws, including Internet Explorer’s Gopher hole, which, until recently, allowed outsiders to take over other people’s computers, access files, and run or delete programs. The Alexis de Tocqueville Institution didn’t warn about the Gopher hole as a potential risk for terrorism, but perhaps that has something to do with funding received from Microsoft.

Now Microsoft is part of a subtler group called The Initiative for Software Choice. The word choice is a response to laws proposed in numerous countries that would mandate government use of open source or free software, thus disqualifying existing Microsoft products from government contracts. The Software Choice group is fighting bills in Italy, Peru, Colombia, Argentina, and California. Microsoft has already lost government contracts to Linux-based systems in China, Korea, Germany, Pakistan, and Brazil, among others. Microsoft has to fight free

software more aggressively as open source continues to gain ground.

### WHY FREE SOFTWARE?

A May 2002 article in the *New York Times* business section described the free software Ximian desktop system as being “a lot like Microsoft Windows but different in one fundamental way. It is free.” The reporter

consent. Microsoft uses spyware to look out for software piracy; other corporations use it to track user habits for marketing information. Programmers can easily detect spyware in transparent source code.

Proprietary software also gives companies a monopoly on maintenance. It’s kind of like selling a car with the hood locked, and only the dealer has the key. Since other programmers can’t go in and fix things, the

was missing the point. The free in free software refers not to cost but to freedom. Free software is about giving programmers access to the software code. “If you think about it,” said FreeDevelopers.net founder Tony Stanco, “a developer can’t really be a developer without access to source code. That would be like a painter without access to paint.” Free software and related support services can be bought and sold, and there are numerous open source and free software licenses to protect intellectual property rights. The standard free software license, the GNU GPL (General Public License), goes beyond open source licenses by requiring that anyone who uses a piece of code under the GPL in their work must in turn make their code public if they give away or sell the new program.

The Microsoft model is called proprietary or closed software. Since only Microsoft has access to the code, they can design programs that are incompatible with non-Microsoft products. The law has forced Microsoft to give competitors enough information to design programs that will run on Windows operating systems, but Microsoft still has an advantage. If they happened to introduce some code to Windows that made a competitor’s product crash every hundredth time it was used, there would be no way to prove it without looking at the code. The same is true of spyware, software that collects information on users without their knowledge or



words Katherine Glover art Joshua MacPhee

company can charge whatever they want. Or they can refuse to fix things at all, and just tell you that your program isn't supported anymore and you need to buy an upgrade. Sometimes a proprietary company will even deny a problem exists if it might ruin their image or be too costly to fix. Sometimes they don't even have anyone who knows how to fix it — maybe the programmer who developed that piece of code has fled to Guam and left no forwarding address. An outsider might be able to solve the problem, but not without looking over the code.

The simplest reason to support open source software is that it's better. When thousands of developers all over the world work together to fix bugs and improve a piece of software, flaws get knocked out pretty quickly. But those in the Free Software movement take it a step further, calling it a moral issue of freedom and democracy. "Our job is a lot easier because free software is more efficient and produces better code," says Stanco. "But even if that wasn't true, it would still be right to fight for it."

## FIGHTING FOR IT

Dr. Edgar David Villanueva Nuñez is not a programmer, but his letter to Microsoft regarding *software libre* has become a bit of a manifesto within the free software community. Villanueva is the Peruvian Congressman who introduced a bill in December of 2001 calling for government use of free software. Microsoft fought against the bill, and the general manager of Microsoft Peru, Juan Alberto González, wrote a letter in March 2002 rehashing the

typical MS arguments against open code. Trained as a lawyer, Villanueva refuted the letter point by point in a 5,800-word response which has since been translated into at least six languages. He assured González that the bill did not exclude Microsoft as they were welcome at any time to create software that met the free software conditions.

Villanueva addressed the financial benefits of using free software, which have motivated many companies and governments to switch to Linux, but he stressed that cost was not the basis of his bill. Instead the bill cites three factors. The first is access to public information. "The citizen has a legitimate right to know," he noted in his letter, "how his vote is computed or his taxes calculated." The second factor is permanence of data, which is threatened when an outside company has the ability to stop supporting a program and demand the purchase of a newer version. The third factor is state security.

People are turning to free software for all sorts of reasons. In many countries, the government is too poor to afford Microsoft's licensing schemes. In China, there is concern over rampant piracy, and widespread Linux distribution is a discreet way to eliminate the issue. Still in other countries, it is a matter of national pride, and of not handing over wads of cash and control to a single American corporation. Arturo Espinosa, a Ximian consultant in Mexico, said, "Free software allows us as Mexicans to turn the rules around completely and change from a model where we import foreign technology and import base materials to one where we ourselves can provide the tools for our own needs."

But in Mexico, Microsoft has maintained a tight control of the software market. When President Vicente Fox took office in December of 2000, he pledged that 9 in 10 Mexicans would have Internet access by the end of his six-year term through a project called e-Mexico. Mexican free software activists saw this as a great opportunity to develop a strong native software industry and immediately offered their services, but instead Fox accepted a multi-million dollar donation from Microsoft. Microsoft will pay to train thousands of computer technicians and an additional gift from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation will bring the country's 6,000 libraries online using Microsoft products.

Microsoft is trying the same trick in Peru. They have plans to invest an estimated \$50 million in the country and Bill Gates made a \$550,000 donation to the national school system, flying in to personally hand the donation to President Alejandro Toledo.

Will it work? As of October, the Peruvian bill is still on the table. Meanwhile, Microsoft might be losing ground on the home front. Many public schools are considering or have already made the switch to Linux after harassment from Microsoft. Microsoft has demanded that some districts conduct costly internal software audits to certify licensing compliance — or take the convenient alternative of purchasing an annual bulk license to cover every computer in the district. Some instead take the alternative of ditching Microsoft altogether. With any luck, the company's greed will eventually backfire. ★

## PRINT REVIEW

### Collective Liberation on My Mind

by Chris Crass

[www.kersplebedeb.com](http://www.kersplebedeb.com)

I'll come clean right off: Chris Crass is a friend and collaborator, and I'm not an objective observer of his life and work, both of which I unabashedly admire. Chris calls me a mentor, but it goes both ways. Furthermore, I wrote a blurb that appears on the back of *Collective Liberation on My Mind*, the collection of seven essays by Chris, published in pamphlet form by Kersplebedeb. The blurb reads:

This collection of essays by a young anarchist probes the issues of white supremacy and sexism as he observes them not only in the society at large but also in our social justice movements and in himself. Rarely, do we find anyone dealing equally with race and gender from an anti-racist, feminist point of view, least of all a young, white male, but this is precisely what Chris Crass does. The essay on African-American lesbian feminist Barbara Smith and the interview with Chicana feminist and veteran movement organizer, Elizabeth Martínez, take the interlocking issues beyond the familiar, progressive rhetoric.

I want to go further in recommending this work as essential for every activist.

Chris Crass, now in his late twenties, has been engaged in anarchist organizing since his high school and junior college days on the border of South Central Los Angeles and infamous (for its rabid white supremacy and reactionary Americanism) Orange County. Soon Chris joined Food Not Bombs to which he dedicated his considerable energies and intelligence for eight years. Currently, he works with the Direct Action Network, the Colours of Resistance, and the Challenging White Supremacy Workshop.



Child of parents who had made the post-World War II transition from the white working class to salaried status, he found himself a minority in a heavily African-American and Latino populated locale. Many white boys in similar situations have been recruited during the past three decades to white supremacists groups from which few escape. Fortunately for us and for Chris, this was not his fate, or choice. He early on recognized the reality of racism and the injustice all around him.

Chris's narrative has made him understand that if this could happen to him, rather by accident, that it could happen to the majority of white youth in the United States by intentional organizing. A few years ago, already committed to combating sexism and homophobia, Chris came to the conclusion that racism was a key divisive element in the movement and a barrier to forming truly revolutionary social consciousness. The essays in *Collective Liberation on My Mind* focus on the past three years since the Battle of Seattle during which Chris has evolved into a skilled antiracist activist, organizer, and trainer.

Each of these concise and jargonless essays is 6-8 pages in length, except the final one, "Looking to the Light of Freedom: Lessons from the Civil Rights Movement and Thoughts on Anarchist Organizing," which is an ambitious 18 page essay that also serves as a summation (lessons) of the period, 1999-2002.

Above all, these essays reflect a passionate and determined, yet a genuinely modest and generous young thinker and activist with a great gift for writing. Chris has taken the slogan, "The Personal is Political," of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement that was implemented by the Women's Liberation Movement in the later 1960s, and applied to today's social, economic, political and cultural realities, and the result is a powerful tract reminiscent of the classic anarchists' offerings.

—Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz

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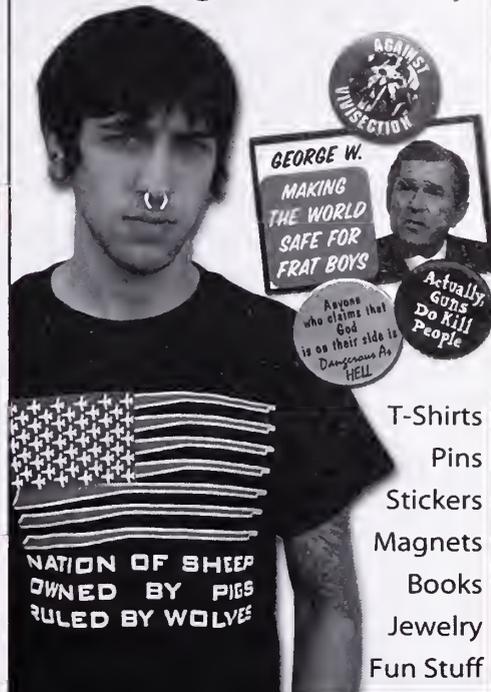
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Last night my girlfriend got a call from her stepbrother. He's never called before, but since he's in the Army and is about to get shipped over to Afghanistan, he thought he'd just say Hi!



Oh well! Sucks to be poor! "We'll be sure to tell your grieving mother about the great college scholarships available to our soldiers who are alive!"



I know! "We'll be sure she knows that her son is being greeted in Heaven by 70 beautiful college loan officers! Maybe he'll finally get that engineering degree! Fuck you very much!"



October 9, 2001

If you could say one thing to God right now, what would it be?



I think I would say, "Thank You, God, for Your healing gift of religion." What about you?



I'd say, "Dear God: I regret to inform You that U.S. policy now dictates we bomb the fuck out of You up in Heaven."



Oh! I'd also say, "Monotheistic religion has always brought out the best in us humans; thank You so much for the idea of a vengeful supernatural entity who rewards people in the afterlife! That shit makes a lot of sense!"



October 9, 2001

Holy fuck—anthrax in New York City! We're getting our fucking ass kicked!



Seriously! Who the fuck are we fighting, fucking Lex Luthor? When is the goddamn Death Star gonna shoot that big-ass laser at us?



I know! What's next—George W. Bush is gonna hold a press conference and fuckin' rip his face off and it's gonna be Ming the Merciless up under there? Jesus!



October 14, 2001

OK, one last scenario: Say we somehow LOST the War on Terrorism, and the Taliban fucking invaded New York and kicked you out of your apartment. Now you're living in a cement hovel on Staten Island. Would you suicide-bomb yourself to get your apartment back for your kids?



Dude, listen to me! I am not the suicide-bombing type! I like to hang out with my friends and relax and fuckin' listen to "smooth jazz." MAYBE I would throw some rocks from Staten Island, but I'm not about to go frickin' explode myself! I don't want total strangers picking up my goddamn strewn-about body parts—I don't even like having my picture taken!



What the fuck is wrong with me???



May 2, 2002

GET YOUR WAR ON

excerpts from David Rees's book by the same name published by Soft Skull Press available online at [www.clamormagazine.org](http://www.clamormagazine.org)



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