

CounterPunch

UKRAINE: THE CRISIS IN CONTEXT BY PATRICK SMITH

OBAMA'S PITBULL: THE REINVENTION OF AL SHARPTON BY YVETTE CARNELL

NAFTA'S DIRTY SECRET BY DAVID MACARAY

BERNARD SANDERS: PROFIT OF FALSE HOPE BY RON JACOBS

THE EARLY ROC DOCS OF D.A. PENNEBAKER BY KIM NICOLINI



CounterPunch

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COVER IMAGE:

**Greetings from the Cold War by
Nick Roney.**

In Memory of
Alexander Cockburn
1941-2012



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Miss You Gaby

Gabriel hooked me up with Jeffrey and Alex to publish an article on Vietnam in 2005--"Fear and (Self-) Loathing in Lubbock," that's made me persona non grata professionally. And I'm proud that Gabe had a role to play in my pariah status. He really was genuinely helpful and interested in the limited contacts I had with him. And, like me, he believed that you couldn't find better Italian food than in Northeast Ohio.

*Bob Buzzanco
Houston, Texas*

Wind in Jeffrey's Sails

I grew up in Michigan, played some ball as well and escaped to other parts soon after college. I think St. Clair's story "Mean Streets" was great and summed up better than hundreds of long-winded articles what it is like in the USA. Right up there with Joe Bageant.

Kent Palmer

Junk Publishers

MG Piety's essay on the gatekeepers of publishing in the latest magazine was great. I had a run-in with Random House about 4 years ago over a comic book memoir I did with Harvey Pekar that got torpedoed by his widow and/or Random House changing its mind about publishing it. The whole experience left me totally bitter, compounded by learning that the German corporation that owns Random House used Jewish slave labor during WWII. The editors I

had contact with struck me as total idiots who got the jobs through connections made at Harvard or Yale. You really nailed it. These high-end publishers are mainly interested in publishing junk.

*Louis Proyect
New York*

Farewell Kolko

Gabriel Kolko exerted the deepest of influence on me, in Madison, who arrived years after he departed. Even some socialist pamphlets in the library had "Gaby Kolko" on the title page! His gifts to the Historical Society. His contributions to many areas of history were crucial to my generation. And others to follow.

*Paul Buhle
Madison, Wisconsin*

Anatomy of a War

Kolko was heroic in his courage, discovery and insight. The *Anatomy of a War* stands alone in its excellence, I think, in its contribution to our understanding of the Vietnam War and U.S. imperialism. It is in part a deep meditation on historical tragedy. The news of his passing leaves me heartsick.

*Stephen Gosch
Madison, Wisconsin*

His Last Words

We feel comforted by Jeffrey's short obituary on CounterPunch's website. Gabriel's last words to his friends being with him were "Anyone has to die sometime". Actually the last issue of CounterPunch was on top of Gabriel's desk when he died.

*Pim van den Berg
Amsterdam*

A Seminal Book

Thank you for the post about Gabriel Kolko's passing. *The Triumph of Conservatism* was a seminal book for me, as well. It helped inform my practice of regulatory law and my understanding of ruling class strategic thinking. It still makes a mockery of appeals to "competition" and "market forces" in the provision of essential services, like those of Stephen Breyer. His books on Viet Nam and on American diplomacy remain classics.

*Bill Julian
Davis, California*

"The N-Word"

Congratulations for your continued success in keeping CounterPunch, "America's Best Political Newsletter," the best. I would add: CounterPunch is guaranteed to expand your mind; even, at times, blow your mind, with the assurance that your brain will not be harmed.

*Patrick Barr
Kingston, Jamaica*

Title for this one here

I thought St. Clair's article on Obaman contempt for blacks was excellent! I don't know if the fact that he does not have slavery in his family background like most African-Americans is significant or not. Perhaps he is just empathy-deficient. Also really liked Paul Street's May 1 article on the Sterling Affair and White Self-Congratulation. It helped

clarify to me why I dislike the phrase "the N-word"--it lets whites off the hook, as if they would never THINK of uttering the word, when of course they're precisely the ones who did.

Hmm, I seem to have a tendency to refer to the US and whites in the third person. Maybe I should see a shrink.

*Janet McMahon
Washington, DC*

Same Oil Story

Pierre Sprey and Chuck Spinney's recent piece on how oil politics is driving US policy in Ukraine is one of the most insightful pieces I've read on the crisis. Why isn't anyone else writing about this? I guess that's what CounterPunch is for, but still you'd think that eventually the New York Times would stumble on at least part of the story.

*Jeremy Lancaster
Toledo, Ohio*

Their Little Secrets

CounterPunch seems to be straying farther and farther from its original roots. Perhaps it's the move to the West Coast. But where are the juicy stories about Washington villainy? The revelations about devious front groups and malfeasance by lobbyists? The profiles of duplicitous members of congress, their financial shenanigans and extra-marital affairs? Perhaps you should consider reviving the old Our Little Secret column. That said, the writing largely remains top-notch and I like the fact that you've opened up the old boy's club to more stories by and about women--The covers are delightful!

*Best, Elizabeth Conrad
Alexandria, Virginia*



ROAMING CHARGES

A View to a Kill

BY JEFFREY ST. CLAIR

Shortly after five o'clock in the morning on April 29, a prison SWAT team arrives at Clayton Lockett's cell on death row in the Oklahoma State Penitentiary in McAlester. The burly guards unlock Lockett's door and order him to the ground to be cuffed and shackled for a trip to the prison infirmary, where the prisoner is to be x-rayed prior to his execution by lethal injection. Lockett refuses to comply.

As the SWAT team prepares to forcibly enter Lockett's cell, the prisoner jabs his wrist with a crudely-fashioned tool. The guards storm the cell and repeatedly taser Lockett as his body spasms on the floor. Incapacitated by the jolts of electricity, Lockett is restrained and hauled to the prison medical unit, where he is left in a cell, bleeding and semi-conscious for an hour and 15 minutes, before his wounds are examined by a physician's assistant.

The raid on Lockett's cell is witnessed by Charles Warner. Warner is locked in the adjacent cell, awaiting his own execution, scheduled for two hours after Lockett has been put to death. That April night was meant to be a macabre double-header, staged by the state's Governor Mary Fallin, whose neck is usually adorned by dangling golden cross. Fallin, who had brazenly defied two court injunctions halting the executions, was eager to show the nation the cheerless efficiency of Oklahoma's death machine in the face of lingering questions over the efficacy of its experimental cocktail of lethal drugs.

For the next 10 hours, Clayton Lockett, still dazed and bleeding, is kept shackled in an observation cell. At 4:10 pm, armed guards once again enter his cell and march him to the shower in the prison's H-Unit. Showing a perverse sense of historical irony, Oklahoma of-

ficials use the prison showers as the holding cell for the execution chamber. Thirty minutes later, "mental health personnel" enter the room and talk with Lockett for 10 minutes. No mention is made in the post-execution documents of what these prison shrinks concluded about the mental state of a man who is only minutes away from being put to death.

Ten minutes later, the prison's new warden Anita Trammell leads Lockett into the execution chamber. At 5:22 PM, guards strap him to the death table. Five minutes later a phlebotomist appears and begins probing Lockett's veins for the best place to insert an IV. The phlebotomist is not a doctor, but a technician specializing in the drawing of blood. In Oklahoma, as in most states, phlebotomists do not need to be licensed and their training, such as it is, is often done in online courses.

The prison's blood man pokes at the veins in Lockett's arms and legs, without finding a "viable insertion point." Next he pricks both of the condemned man's feet and then his neck, without locating a willing vein. Finally, the technician "went to the groin area" and at 6:18, after 50 minutes of repeated poking and prodding, an IV is jabbed into a vein in Lockett's groin. A sheet is draped over the needle and tubes to "prevent witnesses" from viewing Lockett's genitals and the phlebotomist leaves the killing chamber.

At 6:23, the shades to the execution chamber are raised. In front of a gallery of witnesses, Warden Trammell asks Lockett if he wants to make a final statement. He declines. Then Midazolam, a sedative meant to knock Lockett out, begins to flow through the tube and into his bloodstream. Ten minutes later a doctor determines that Lockett is un-

conscious and two killing drugs are pumped into his system: vecuronium bromide, a suffocating agent, and potassium chloride, which is meant to paralyze the heart.

Within seconds, Lockett, who is supposed to be unconscious, begins to shake and gasp. In agonizing pain, he attempts to rise up and screams out: "Oh, man!" The shades are suddenly lowered and over the next crucial 12 minutes the attending physician examines Lockett and determines that his vein had ruptured and the "line had blown."

At 6:56, prison director Robert Patton calls off the execution. Lockett is now unconscious and has a faint pulse. No attempt is made to revive him. At 7:06, the death room doctor pronounces Lockett dead. The cause of death is recorded as heart failure.

These gruesome events prompted a national uproar for a few days and a rare scolding from the President, who, naturally, called for a review. But why? Yes, Lockett's execution was badly botched. But it was not all that different than the 1348 executions that had preceded it since the reinstatement of the death penalty in 1976. The outrage was focused on the incompetence of the execution, rather than the corrupt and morally repugnant system itself.

Gov. Fallin's mistake, as she might have learned had she absorbed her Aeschylus, was her hubris. Her fanatical grandstanding at the chemical gallows only drew unwelcome attention to a deed most Americans support (60 percent in a post-Lockett poll), but don't really care to know much about.

As Obama the drone warrior could have advised her, the death industry feeds on silence and secrecy. When Clayton Lockett resisted those guards in his cell, the veil began to lift on the hideous machinery of death. Given a view to a kill, many Americans seemed momentarily unnerved by the casual savagery being done in their name. Americans want their killing done quick and clean—so that they can call it humane. **CP**



DIAMONDS AND RUST

Who's Counting

BY JOANN WYPIJEWSKI

In Reno the other day I came upon a copy of the estimable weekly *Reno News & Review* for April 10-16, 2014, with an arresting cover story. "Who's Been Killed?" asked big bold letters against a black-and-yellow image of human bulls-eyes over a partial map of Nevada, all of those targets hit dead-on, presumably by the policeman pointing a gun in the illustration's foreground.

The outline promised, "RN&R looks at the numbers of people in Nevada killed by police," and inside a handsome graphic translated the carnage into statistics: 193 people finished off between 2000 and the point of publication this year; 182 by gunshot, 6 by vehicle, 3 by Taser; 154 of the killings officially classified as "justified/excusable."

Most of the dead were men (181), most between the ages of 20 and 39 (123). The youngest was 15; the oldest, 81. The old man, Walter Inzer, was drunk and died in a paddy wagon in Reno on his way to the Washoe County jail. The kid, Tanner Chamberlin, was shot by Las Vegas police as he held a knife to his mother's throat.

Like 45 percent of those who had fatal encounters with police in the state between 2012 and 2014, like 71 percent who had the same bad luck in Washoe County, both Inzer and Tanner were white, though in both the state and county, blacks and Native Americans are overrepresented among the dead.

Tanner was mentally ill, like at least 29 percent of Nevadans killed by police since 2000. Inzer may have been; it's not known. Last year just in Washoe County, every one of the four people who died in police encounters was mentally ill.

That last statistic is maybe not surprising. We have got accustomed to madness and violent death. *Only four...*

I can imagine readers in big cities exclaiming. Multiply four by 3,143 counties or county equivalents in the United States. It's not scientific, but it does provide a jolt out of the "only" fallacy. More informed guesses put the number shot or beaten or run down by cars or tased to death by police forces across the country at 1,000 or 2,000 a year, maybe three to six a day.

For a sense of proportion, 105 police officers died in the line of duty in the US in 2013, one in Nevada. One Nevada cop died in 2006, while statewide twenty-two civilians were killed by cops, the grimmest year on the *RN&R* chart.

Surprise wasn't the emotion that moved the *News & Review's* editor/publisher, Brian Burghart, when he drove past a scene of flashing police lights on his way home from work two years ago, or when he discovered that what brought authorities there involved a stolen car, a defiant thief, and ended with a hail of bullets. Surprise came when Burghart wondered, "How often does that happen?" and then couldn't find an answer to his own question.

Strange as it may seem, that black-and-yellow graphic represents, as advertised, "the most comprehensive dataset for incidents of police-involved homicide that has ever been collected in the state of Nevada." Burghart's question led to his discovery that no state agency collects and maintains these numbers. No federal agency does, either. He decided somebody ought to.

The FBI's Uniform Crime Report gathers the largest collection of crime data in the country. You can search it to find how many law enforcement officers were killed each year in the line of duty, how many were assaulted and where. But like the military, which they increasingly resemble, domestic police

forces don't do body counts. Or not in any standardized, accessible way. The 17,000 or so police agencies that submit all kinds of data to the UCR, in fine detail, aren't asked for their own civilian kill numbers, or don't include them, don't even think about them, aren't taken seriously if they do. Burghart wasn't taken seriously when he filed Freedom of Information Act requests to help him collect this data, or maybe he was...In all events, his curiosity prompted a six-part series in the paper called "Fatal Encounters" and a website, fatalencounters.org, from which the graphs and charts in that April issue were developed.

Nevada was just the starting point. Burghart's ambition is to make *fatalencounters* a national database. Already, you can go to the site and search for the dead by name, by state. Burghart says simply the people should know what happens every time police exert the greatest power they have. There's more to it than that, though.

The man shot up by fifteen police bullets at the scene that Burghart drove by the day of his epiphany was a 41-year-old meth addict, felon, father, tile-layer, lead singer of a Christian rock band, church-goer prone both to violence and its opposite, seeking ministry among troubled souls. Jace Herndon was trouble, which is essentially what the DA said in justifying the actions of the police who killed him. "This case boils down to a person with a problem with authority," he wrote.

I don't think the DA was consciously evoking the cruel overseer in *Cool Hand Luke*; rather, his recitation of Herndon's failings as an excuse for deadly force owes more to a generalized accommodation to rough justice. As Burkhardt points out, none of those failings would warrant a death sentence in a court of law, so "I have to wonder how justified the killing of a man without a gun would have been in a culture that hadn't normalized the idea of authority being above the law." **CP**



EMPIRE BURLESQUE

Sign Language

BY CHRIS FLOYD

Can you see me? Can you see me? I'm holding up a sign. It's a sign expressing my outrage at an atrocious event in a country far away. It's a sign showing my solidarity with the victims of violent extremism.

I took a picture of myself with this sign. I posted the picture on social media, so everyone can see it, so everyone can know how outraged I am at this thing that has happened that I heard about on the news. I want everyone to know that I am taking responsibility — no, I am taking *ownership* of this situation. It is happening to me just as certainly as it is happening to the victims. In fact, the victims actually *belong* to me. They are “ours” — that's what my sign says.

“Bring back our girls!” The girls who were kidnapped from that place somewhere in Africa by that group I'd never heard of before the story about this thing was on the news and started trending on Twitter.

They took “our girls,” the girls who belong to us — *our* girls, the girls we have cared about for so long, living there in that country in Africa where nothing has ever happened until this thing happened and got tweeted about the other night. And when I saw other people were taking pictures of themselves holding up a sign about “our girls” — including Michelle Obama; how cool was *that!* — I downloaded a sign from this website and printed it out and I made a picture of myself with it and put it on the internet to make that group give me back the girls who belong to me and the other people who made signs about this thing.

Then I saw somebody on Facebook said there was this rally for the girls who belong to us because we have

always cared about people like them so deeply for so long — anyway, there was this rally down at the park to show that group that sounds like that Sixties band but of course is actually much worse than them that their evil will not stand. And they said that Anne Hathaway — from *Les Mis!* — was going to be at the rally with a megaphone and one of the signs like the one I'd made a picture of myself holding and put on the internet, where I hope you've seen it and retweeted it to all your friends.

And so I went down to the park and sure enough there was Anne, with a megaphone and this great Mexican-looking scarf and some really killer designer shades and she was standing next to her husband, who was holding a sign telling the Bocos to bring back our girls — because they are our girls just as much as they are the girls of that country where this thing happened — and Anne is shouting into the megaphone, asking all of us: “Do we agree with these cowards?”

And do you know what? There was not a single person in the whole crowd who agreed with raiding a school and kidnapping girls and holding them captive. Not even one person agreed. And so we shouted back to Anne: “No, Anne, we don't agree!”

And while we shouted we waved our signs about bringing back our girls, and took pictures of each other waving our signs and then posted those pictures on the internet. And that showed those Harum Scarum people that they cannot keep what belongs to us — those girls from that place — because we care so much and we do not accept violent extremism in any form.

But hey, L.A. was a great place to stand up for human rights that week.

The night before the thing with Anne Hathaway and our girls, President Obama himself was in town, at the Hyatt in Century City. Some kind of Holocaust foundation thing was giving him an award as an “Ambassador for Humanity” for all his efforts to protect human rights. I wasn't invited of course and anyway I was printing out my sign that night and taking my picture, but I saw on the internet that all kinds of important people were there, like Steven Spielberg and Liam Neeson (the German guy who saved all the Jews) and Kim Kardashian and also even Bruce Springsteen.

And Obama gave a speech and got all choked up talking about our girls in Africa and in Syria, I think; or maybe it was Iraq, but I don't think he mentioned Iraq.

I did see way down in the Twitter feed about the story — people had been tweeting the jokes Conan O'Brien made at the award thing — somebody started talking about Yemen, I think it was, and droning on about drones and death squads or something but then they got blocked because the feed was meant to be honoring the president for protecting human rights, not ragging on the guy about every little thing.

I think it would have been cool if the President had held up a sign that night about our girls like Michelle did, but of course it was a solemn occasion — except for Conan's funny bits! — about respecting the sacredness of all human life. But I know he was holding a sign in his heart and like Anne Hathaway was not agreeing with those cowards killing people and terrorizing innocent lives.

Can you see me? Should I post it again? **CP**



GRASPING AT STRAWS

Where Does the Buck Stop

BY MIKE WHITNEY

The recession that ended 5 years ago has been followed by the weakest expansion in the post World War II era. While corporate profits have skyrocketed and stocks have soared to record highs, the underlying economy has sputtered along at a dismal 2 percent average pace for the last half decade. The slow growth is mainly due to stagnant wages and cutbacks in government spending which have resulted in the loss of decent-paying government jobs. According to Calculated Risk, the public sector workforce has shrunk by more than 700,000 jobs since Obama took office in 2008. The president's austerity measures have been a drag on growth and kept unemployment needlessly high.

In May, the Bureau of Labor and Statistics reported that US businesses added another 288,000 jobs pushing the unemployment rate down to 6.3%. Unfortunately, the upbeat data belies the grim condition of the labor market. A quick look at the labor force participation rate explains what's going on just below the surface. According to the BLS, the participation rate dropped to 62.8% in April, a 36-year low. More than 800,000 people have dropped off the government's radar and stopped looking for work entirely. Had Obama pushed for additional fiscal stimulus or postponed his deficit trimming until the economy had gained strength, many of these people would be working today.

The recession eliminated many high-wage jobs and replaced them with low-paying, entry-level service sector jobs. According to a new report by the National Employment Law Project, "Fast food is driving the bulk of the job growth at the low end". The report illustrates the desperation of workers who

have run out their benefits and been forced to take jobs that don't provide a living wage. It's worth noting that Obama recently voiced his support for a raise to the minimum wage, from \$7.25 to \$10.10 per hour, but has made no attempt to push a bill through congress. Once again, the president appears to be engaged in a bit of midterm politicking, much like his on-again, off-again support for same sex marriage. Both issues are merely used to energize the base around election time or to differentiate between two corporate-owned parties whose respective platforms are virtually identical.

From a PR point of view, Obama has done a masterful job of deflecting blame for the abysmal condition of the economy. As of May 14, Obama's personal approval ratings stood at an impressive 46 percent which is considerably higher than one would expect when six out of ten Americans believe "the economy is still in recession" and more than seven in ten think "the country is on the wrong track." The figures show that people still like Obama and don't hold him personally responsible for the policies which have exacerbated the divisions between rich and poor and transformed the US into a de facto oligarchy ruled by Wall Street.

Obama has presided over the greatest redistribution of wealth in history. While working people continue to face stagnant wages, reduced buying power, high unemployment, slow growth and incomes which have dropped an eye-watering 7.2 percent since the slump ended in 2009; Wall Street has seen profits surge due to 5 years of zero rates, unlimited government backing for wobbly financial institutions, and \$4 trillion of asset purchases by the Central

Bank. So while wages continue to fall in relation to increases in productivity, the financialization of the economy has allowed the investor class to nab an ever greater share of the gains. Naturally, this has had a negative impact on the economy. Droopy wages mean workers have less money for consumption that results in chronic weak demand. The way to fix the problem and boost growth is through stricter regulations, stronger unions, additional fiscal stimulus, and by shifting more of the tax burden for funding the government onto corporations and high-income individuals. Obama has done none of these things. Instead, he's slashed federal spending while handing out blank checks to Wall Street. His approach has left the economy in a shambles.

And this is why Obama has removed the term "recovery" from his stump speeches. It's because the American people know it's all a fake. Everyone knows that jobs are scarce, that food stamp usage is soaring, that inequality has gotten worse, and that times are tough. They may not know that "Four out of 5 adults struggle with joblessness, near-poverty or reliance on welfare for at least parts of their lives." (CBS News), or that young adults are now on the hook for more than \$1 trillion in student loans, or that the number of workers who have dropped out of the labor force has reached an all-time high, or that the homeownership rate in the United States has dropped to the lowest level in 19 years, or that "Forty percent of individuals say they couldn't come up with \$2,000 if an emergency arose" (House of Debt), or that 62 percent of Americans scrape by on \$20 or less per hour. They may not know the details, but people know that things are bad and that Obama's policies have made things worse.

So while the president's supporters may absolve him of all responsibility for the economic mess we're in; other people see things differently. After all, he's the man in charge, and that's where the buck stops. **CP**



DAYDREAM NATION

My Story as Told by Water

BY KRISTIN KOLB

There are few working class outposts left on the edges of the Pacific Northwest coast, which I now consider the “Ivory Coast” for its concentration of white, wealthy yachtsmen and -women, and the array of second and third homes hammered and docked into coves that pass along the ferry routes.

Still, it’s my home, and I claim it. Here’s one reason. In January I “foot-ferryed” it from the San Juan archipelago of Washington State, back to Vancouver, Canada. On that trip, I took a 5 AM mini-van taxi with a Jack Russell Terrier on my lap, driven by a 60-year-old former Greenpeace staffer who chops firewood for cabin resorts and grows various plants for a living. Why did you leave Portland and Greenpeace?” I asked, with the dog’s belly heavy and soft against mine.

“My wife got cancer, and we wanted to live a better way. And Greenpeace didn’t care about us. I’d made enough as a city bus driver in Portland to leave. I thank the union for that.”

The ferry I took back to Canada was the last sailing for the winter, so the captain bought two dozen bacon-covered donuts for his passengers. In the line up, I met a family of four, originally from the Lummi Indian nation, located a few miles from Bellingham, Washington, headed back to Vancouver Island. They’d just left a funeral on Lummi Island – the reservation there is well known for its poverty and drug addiction. There had been a healing and a potlatch.

I remembered reading about Lummi Island twice in the *New York Times*’ fevered, feature-ish articles, first about how the tribe had decided to banish addicts as an act of self-preservation. “Banishment once turned unwanted members of a tribe into a caste of the

‘walking dead,’ and some people criticize it as excessive and inhumane, more extreme than the punishments meted out by the world outside and a betrayal of an already fragile culture,” wrote reporters Sarah Kershaw and Monica Davey in the *Times* in 2004 “on this sprawling, desperately poor reservation.” Poverty porn redux, which I’d written about in a previous column.

Of course, by the time I was scarfing bacon donuts on the ferry at 7 AM (no addicts are up then), Lummi Island had transformed from a ghetto to a foodie’s paradise. The *Times* has featured this island in its “10 Restaurants Worth a Plane Ride,” and the Willows Inn – you stay there overnight to eat a prix fixe meal prepped by a chef trained in Denmark – dinner is a minimum of \$165 per person and accommodation is another \$400.

Still, the Northwest Coast is my home and now I’m back in Port Townsend, Washington, writing for *CounterPunch*, almost a year after visiting Port Townsend and writing my column from almost the same spot. Port Townsend is a chic Victorian relic, like Astoria, Oregon to the south. It thrives on tourism but maintains a certain vigor; the sea is still an economy, not a luxury.

For that column, I wrote “Ave Angelina,” about a silly debate raging between the *International Socialist Organization* (which I thought went out of the newspaper business a long time ago) and my colleagues here at the magazine regarding an article about Angelina Jolie undergoing surgery to cut off her breasts to avoid cancer. I’d never even thought about breast cancer, except to abhor the pink ribbons and respect Barbara Ehrenreich. I mentioned two of my heroines, Kim Gordon of Sonic Youth, and Ari Up

of the punk band, The Slits, both had breast cancer. Up died. Kim is fine.

Now, just a smattering of months later, in Port Townsend, looking at the water, sitting in this brothel-turned-hotel, and I have the nasty breast cancer. What the fuck? Is it the curse of *CounterPunch*? I hate health writing. Give me some juicy war reportage, not the cancer beat, please.

I started chemotherapy on April 25. I’m 40. I did not ask for a prognosis. It’s Stage 3 – so that means it’s in my boob and lymph nodes; I was told prior it was likely Stage 4. It’s now May 19. I am starting to sound like a Nate Silver column, numbers. Shit has sucked – fatigue, holy-mother-of-god bone pain, hella anger. But thank Jesus to the nth degree it’s not in my liver or lungs or brain, which is where breast cancer spreads.

Since April 4, when I started running around like a chicken with my head cut off, I’ve raised, mostly through *CounterPunch*, \$500 shy of \$30,000 to help me with my medical and living expenses. And when I say mostly, I mean, almost all. Nearly everything. Because of this community. To say we’re a snide, male-dominated, stingy bunch is like saying the Algonquin Round Table was witless and sanguine. The ISO, and their half-pitched calls for boycotts of *CounterPunch* over a small article about breast cancer, seems as laughable as they did back when I remember the outfit, which isn’t well, and for the best.

I didn’t want to write about cancer, but they say write what you know. And I thank you, CounterPunchers, I must thank you. You’ve humbled me. And you’ve made me stronger. And thank you for this holiday weekend, with a room with a view in a haunted brothel. Last night, I went to the end of the pier and just sat and felt the waves move the dock. And I cried – for gratitude and for being scared and angry and under siege.

And breakfast tomorrow with a CounterPuncher. I hope we don’t talk about Thomas Pikkety or cancer. **CP**

Cold War By Other Means

Ukraine: the Crisis in Context

BY PATRICK SMITH

It is never easy to see the present as history: Being inside events, being the stuff of which events are made, makes distance and the perspective that comes of it difficult. It is not a new thought. But the crisis in Ukraine over the past six months shoves it at us anew. Nothing else in the quarter-century period we call “post-Cold War” presses a consciousness of history upon us so urgently. In no other case has the history of the piece been so cynically manipulated.

The necessity of history to understanding, history subverted to reproduce a couple of centuries of prejudice, West toward East: There is no coincidence here, which is one of the tragedies before us. An immense effort is expended to persuade us that what is perfectly plain to see in Ukraine is other than it is. Among the few virtues of the crisis to date is that clarity is available so long as one looks; the chicanery of those veiling the West’s provocations and irresponsibility is evident.

Washington and the European allies have waged several wars in Ukraine. One is Cold War II, and now that President Obama has declared this more or less openly, the thought of the “post-Cold War era” looks like a delusion. One is to roll the neoliberal order across the planet like shiny linoleum—the project of the end-of-history ideologues these past 25 years and latterly the nation-building set. Another, not least, is the war against democratic consent.

It is hard to say which of these will finally deliver the bitterest body counts. At writing the hot war, against Ukrainians, takes the greatest toll. We are now treated to the same spectacle served up last year in Egypt: An elected leader is deposed for his transgressions, unelected provisionals replace him, and the unelected then turn the army on the electorate. This, the Americans tell us, is called “democratic restoration”—Secretary of State Kerry’s extraordinary description of the coup in Egypt last year, perfectly applicable now to the American position on Ukraine.

Most readers, viewers, and listeners tuned into the Ukraine crisis when protests against Viktor Yanukovich, who was elected president in 2010, erupted in Kiev last November. Instantly the core problem confronts us: This lops off two decades of history involving a minority of opportunist Ukrainians, NATO’s post-Soviet ambitions, and the view of Ukraine, shared in Washington and the European capitals, as “the biggest prize”—felicitous phrase of Carl Gershman, president of the National Endowment for Democracy—in the neoliberal project. But we can come back to the missing 20 years. Good enough to begin with the beginning of the end for Yanukovich.

He is a curious figure, even in exile. He is no more or

less corrupt than anyone else in the Kiev political scum. Yanukovich is of interest primarily because he was well-positioned to lead Ukraine through a passage that could have—best outcome—left it well-balanced between Russia’s historically weighty influence and an opening to Europe that reflected the post-Soviet aspirations of a segment of the population concentrated in the west of the country.

Yanukovich built his political base in the east, where the majority speaks Russian and where ties to Russia—cultural, historical, familial, economic—are dense. Yet he came to office promising European integration via an elaborate trade and political-association pact with the European Union. His project was a defensible reinterpretation of Ukraine in 21st century vocabulary. He was elected because voters judged him the man to get it done.

Putting this to paper in America now is like belching in chapel, so thoroughly has Yanukovich been vilified. This is a case of fooling all of the people some of the time. For one thing, Yanukovich looks like Mandela next to the divisive imposters who took him down with the support of atavistic thugs and crypto-Nazis. For another, the E.U. went to the eve of signatures on a deal with Yanukovich that was many months in negotiation. Why, if he is so scurrilous a figure?

Yanukovich is invariably described now as “pro-Russian” in the shorthand of western media. It is not so simple. I have read one good account of what happened when Yanukovich abruptly dropped the deal with the E.U. last November 21, setting the stage for his own exit. This was filed Dec. 19 by Elizabeth Piper, a *Reuters* correspondent in Moscow (“Special Report: Why Ukraine spurned the EU and embraced Russia.”) Yanukovich accepted Russia’s offer of a \$15 billion bailout two days prior to the publication of Piper’s piece.

There was intense pressure from Vladimir Putin, Piper reported. But the E.U. and the International Monetary Fund gave Yanukovich five compelling reasons not to sign the deal he had just negotiated, Piper found. One, while Yanukovich thought Ukraine would need \$160 billion over three years to dig out of crisis and make up for lost trade with Russia, the Europeans had an initial sum of \$850 million on the table and the I.M.F. \$5 billion. The numbers were not remotely close.

Two, the I.M.F.’s check would arrive with conditions Yanukovich judged severe enough to destabilize; the I.M.F. also required that Kiev repay earlier debts in nearly the same amount, \$5 billion, the year after a deal was signed. This is key, signaling that little bailout money would benefit Ukrainians. In effect, the I.M.F.’s intent was to bail out Western banks by assuming their debt and forcing Ukraine to take up the heavy harness of the fund’s standard austerity program. With a \$17 billion bailout package now on the table, the object remains the same: It is not to build a vigorous nation that benefits its citizens; it is to extract capital and open it to transnationals to extract labor and resources.

Three, the E.U. demanded a pledge of allegiance: Kiev

would have to forego future aid from Russia. Four, there was no offer of E.U. membership, which Ukrainians eager to tilt westward prized above all else; the deal offered only “association,” with many fewer rights and privileges. Five, the Europeans demanded the release of Yulia Tymoshenko, Yanukovich’s arch-rival, who was jailed on corruption charges that were politically motivated, certainly, but just as certainly merited.

In an interview with Piper after Yanukovich cut the deal with Russia and as protests raged in Independence Square, Volodymyr Oliynyk, a Yanukovich ally in the governing party, explained it this way: “Ukraine is at a crossroads and there’s a huge boulder there. We go one way to Russia and we get hit. We go the other way, to Europe, and we get hit. We stand still, and we get hit.” Then a pause. Then: “But it will hurt less this way.”

There are aspects of the E.U.’s offer to Ukraine indicating readily enough an intent that was other than benign. The Europeans had no business demanding that Kiev drastically shrink ties with Russia—not if the thought was to help Ukrainians decide their future for themselves, as the Western allies continue to insist. Equally, the I.M.F.’s off-the-shelf conditionality is never pretty to watch when implemented; pressing it on Ukraine was either radically insensitive or—far more likely—intended to do the work of undermining Yanukovich as a man of divided loyalties. As to the Tymoshenko demand, what is Brussels doing telling one crook to let another crook out of jail? Her virtues among Westerners are her taste for free-market reform and a pronounced animosity toward Russia. This makes the E.U.’s insistence yet more embarrassing when understood in context.

The E.U.’s strategy to draw Ukraine westward with one swift yank was politesse itself compared with what the Americans were up to. Here, the starting point that is not the starting point is the infamous “F”—the E.U.” conversation between Victoria Nuland, Obama’s assistant secretary for European affairs, and Geoffrey Pyatt, who was named ambassador to Kiev last August. Their exchange was made public February 6 on YouTube—we do not know by whom, but Putin’s people would be almost self-evidently the pranksters. The best analysis of this tape I know of is that of Jonathan Marcus, the BBC’s diplomatic correspondent (“Ukraine crisis: Transcript of Nuland–Pyatt call.”)

No American newspaper or broadcaster has ever given an honest account of this extraordinary recording. It was quickly airbrushed from the record, Stalin-style. The *New York Times* published an inexcusable piece of hackery in the just-a-little-naughty-fun line, casting Nuland as a feisty lady full of brio and smarts, no harm done (Mark Landler, “From ‘Least Diplomatic Diplomat,’ Salty Peek at Trans-Atlantic Strains.”) The sailor’s language was scarcely the point, of course. The tape ran longer than four minutes, a blip in what was plainly a running conversation of many hours over many months. In

this interim we have what may be an historic first: Real-time actuality of an American coup operation in progress.

Go back to February 6, date of the YouTube release. Yanukovich was against the wall by then. The protesters, drawn out when the E.U. talks failed and then focused on corruption, mismanagement, and hardship, were soon to be joined by people of a different order. These were ultra-nationalists and neo-fascists from the western sections of Ukraine, many of whom were xenophobically anti-Russian devotees of extra-constitutional violence. Their political ancestors had fought with the Nazis against the Soviets. Their main organizations were Right Sektor and Svoboda. These formed a fringe constellation in Ukraine’s political sky, but they were about to become more. They arrived from the west armed—clubs, axes, pistols, appropriated rifles—and altered the character of the Independence Square demonstrations. When protest transformed into a coup, it was these groups who led it.

Early on Feb. 21, after all-night talks, Yanukovich signed an agreement with the opposition. By this time, Independence Square had turned into a violent standoff. Snipers, even now not positively identified, had killed scores of demonstrators. Yanukovich assented to early elections, negotiations to form a unity government, constitutional reform, and a supervised investigation into the origins of the violence. E.U. foreign ministers brokered the deal; three opposition figures signed: Oleh Tyahnybok, Vitali Klitschko, and Arseniy Yatsenyuk.

This pact did not survive the day. On the square, Klitschko apologized for shaking Yanukovich’s hand in front of a camera. The gesture was to no avail, as the momentum was now decisively in the street. Dmytro Yarosh, a long-noted ultra-nationalist and Right Sektor’s leader, announced that his group rejected the agreement and had no intention of desisting. Yanukovich’s top people quickly began to scatter, and the collapse was swift. By the next day, Yanukovich had fled (probably for his life) and parliament, rather after the fact, voted him unfit for office.

There are some bouncing balls worth following at this point. At the time of their recorded exchange, Nuland and Pyatt were focused on the manipulation of three political figures: Tyahnybok, Klitschko, and Yatsenyuk, the three who signed the pact with Yanukovich. The Americans’ preference was for Yatsenyuk to head the post-Yanukovich government they planned and for the other two to remain outside, doing “political homework and stuff,” as Nuland put it in a reference to Klitschko. Yatsenyuk is now the provisional prime minister, and the others are neatly in their assigned roles. Klitschko intends to run for president in elections now brought forward to May 25. Tyahnybok remains a parliamentary deputy and heads the viciously far-right Svoboda party. This is a guy who, in his speeches, counts Jews on his long list of “scum,” refers easily to “the Moscow–Jewish mafia,” and who wants Ukrainian passports to designate the bearer’s ethnicity. There is a big “but” here. Tyahnybok loves NATO. He wants it to

roll up to Russia's borders, and so is useful in the provisional legislature and, presumably, beyond.

There is some language in what you have just read that is considered controversial. "Fascist," neo-Nazi," "thugs," "ultra-nationalists": This kind of talk is off-limits, notably among us Americans. For us, the primary problem is that this is Russia's vocabulary when describing the putschists in Kiev, and if the Russians are saying it, it cannot be right. As in Egypt last year, Americans will not even call a coup a coup. The other problem is that the Obama administration has elected to succor these people. So they must be Ukraine's democrats, heroically tilting westward in the nation's hour of need.

It is bitter for Americans, especially those nursing long Cold War hangovers, but it is well to deliver this truth: Moscow's

account of the Ukraine crisis is vastly more coherent than Washington's.

No sort of rus-sophilia need come into this. No need to carry a candle for Putin, although, even now, exercises a restraint in his backyard. The Russians are correct about one thing: We have witnessed a coup. Those behind it are all

the things Moscow says they are: This is a matter of record, providing you can get your hands on the record. The provisionals in no wise represent the majority preference among Ukraine's 46 million citizens—also a matter of record. The Americans and Europeans are complicit in fomenting this crisis—again, on the record.

Ukraine has proven an extraordinary display of language as political instrument. No side resists the temptation. And if there is no innocence, the question of guilt has little meaning. But terminology still bears the weight of truth or fallacy. So you have to insist on "thugs," "criminals," anti-Semites," "coup," "poseurs," and so on. This said, nomenclature is only one device deployed to make up our minds for us. Far more powerful is the use and misuse of history, and here we can enter into the missing 20 years noted above.

The American pose has been that of the un-implicated onlooker. Anyone who knows the history of the American century knows this is stock stuff, tried if rarely true. The only

thing more astonishing than the official claim to innocence this time is the craven willingness of the American media to open wide and swallow whole. I have been among many critical of the press week in and out for months, but as a former correspondent, I honestly cannot register why these people would abandon their station so abjectly.

In the excavation of the history, the Nuland-Pyatt tape is the Rosetta Stone. Once deciphered, however, we ought not linger long with it, for these two are minor operatives, and there are stores of tablets behind their stone needing interpretation. The coup they mapped was the end result, the political piece, in a campaign to wrest Ukraine from the Russian sphere of influence that dates to the Soviet collapse. This, too, is a matter of record. In a speech last winter Nuland acknowledged

this project, a public-private undertaking involving—her figure—\$5 billion in various kinds of investment.

If you study the Dulles brothers—John Foster at State, Allen at the C.I.A.—there is nothing startling here, unless you count an almost slavish fidelity to the Dulles playbook over the course of



Protesters clash in Crimea. Photo: AFP

nearly seven decades. Stir up the street, finance mosquito newspapers and radio stations and get some established hacks on the payroll, get the paramils going, arrange the puppet pols, bring it all to a plan: Iran 1953 was the template, applied the following year in Guatemala and on through Chile 1973, Iran-Contra in Nicaragua, and now in Ukraine. Equipped with the secret history, one finds it entirely in keeping that the Obama people are working with Right Sektor, Svoboda, and the others. Pyatt's first act as ambassador last August was to arrange a grant for an online television broadcaster to help the Independence Square demonstrators organize and multiply.

There is one significant difference between our time and the Cold War decades. Since the Soviet collapse, the coup function has passed from the C.I.A. to the State Department. Diplomats and angelic civil-society people do much of the job now. This was an astute shift. An appearance of innocence is achieved. Few, apart from those on the receiving end, think

to question the common code: “democratic practice,” “good governance,” “institution-building,” and so on. This is the language of the Agency for International Development, the National Endowment for Democracy, and think tanks such as the New America Foundation. Apple-pie subversion is a plainer name for these endeavors in a crisis zone such as Ukraine or—another operation, apparently failed for the time being—Venezuela.

Among other consequences, liberals too true-believing to know what they are getting into can join neoconservatives such as Nuland, who know very well. The N.A.F. thinks it means well—or professes as much, we have to say—with its Commotion Wireless, a hack-proof communications tool it has developed, termed “internet in a suitcase” in the *New York Times*. The N.A.F. says it is for use in authoritarian environments, but intent has nothing to do with it. This is an instrument of intrusion, and no wonder the State Department funded it. The *Times* reported on April 21 that State now backs a similar contraption called “mesh network.” And here we go: U.S. A.I.D. pledges \$4.3 million for a mesh network in Cuba (Carlotta Gall and James Glanz, “U.S. Promotes Network to Foil Digital Spying.”)

This kind of context reminds us what we are watching in Ukraine through a thicket of euphemisms to surpass Orwell’s imaginings. In this the Europeans have proven a great disappointment, at least to me. After Germans took down the Wall, one anticipated a tolerant incubation of some kind of Third Way, at the outside maybe a take on Rudolf Bahro’s *Alternative in Eastern Europe*. This proves sheer *angelisme*, as the French put it. All that distinguishes the E.U. from the Americans in Ukraine is a tactic. Brussels preferred economic enticement and intimidation, legalistically refined, while Washington, as is its wont, pushed past the niceties of sovereignty, the internal affairs of others, somebody else’s right to democratic process. The intent was all along shared.

The intent, to put a complex matter simply, was to declare the Cold War done but to carry on waging it by other means. NATO was the central instrument, although hardly has it been the only gun on the rack, for the object was larger than mere military advantage: It was the imposition of a neoliberal order admitting of no exceptions in the service of fortifying its own self-confidence. As Joseph Brodsky suggested in a 1994 review of the post–Soviet predicament, all the Indians are now to commence imitation of the cowboys.

The root of this drive extends to the mid-19th century, when the idea of the West as a political construct arose. Jules Michelet, otherwise one of the great historians of his time, was high on this line of thinking. The West needed an “Atlantic union” in response to the rise of czarist Russia. So “the West” was defensive from the first, formed in reaction. There was also something unconscious reflected in it. Russia was the East, given to communal forms of social organization and some dark, irrational peasant consciousness, pre-Carte-

sian and anti-Western to its core—and so an implicit threat, never to be any other.

These assumptions still make for blindness. The political West has never understood the extent to which it aggresses, even recklessly, in the name of its own protection. It is not popular now to ask Americans how they would respond were Putin to activate in, say, the Yucatan Peninsula. No one likes to think too much about the Cuban missile crisis just now. Another bitter truth arrives: the truth of Putin’s notable restraint throughout the Ukraine crisis. He turned on Kiev, and then took Crimea, only when it was evident the ultras had systematically changed the character of the demonstrations and the determination was to take Ukraine westward, never mind that a Western-backed coup was in the process of failing. Lately he is charged as the master puppeteer of the anti-Kiev groups active in the eastern and southern regions. Never mind there is no hard evidence to support this assertion, that he has consistently called for negotiation and an end to provocations, that he urged militias occupying eastern cities to step back from the two referenda they went ahead and conducted on May 12. Try to imagine an American leader acting similarly in an analogous circumstance in the western hemisphere: You will fail, it cannot be done.

No one says too much about spheres of influence, either—a very odd omission at this point. These have always counted among the blunter instruments of statecraft. The Berlin Conference in 1885, when Europeans chopped up Africa, is generally taken to be the high point of the phenomenon, but this distinction actually goes to the Cold War—the carve-up of the planet. It is among our shared tasks, in my view, to outgrow this technology. But we have not—not yet, to put the best face on it. In our time, a wise diplomat—someone other than a technocrat trained in rational choice theory—will understand that spheres must be observed even as they are not honored. But instead of wisdom we have an alloy of triumphalist arrogance and ignorance, wholly wanting in creativity.

Putin spoke before the Federal Council in Moscow just after annexing Crimea (“Address by the President of the Russian Federation.” The Kremlin. <http://eng.kremlin.ru/news/6889>. Posted March 18, 2014). It is worth putting down the old armor and all presumption long enough to read these 47 minutes. They are his take on the spheres-of-influence question. They are a credible anatomy of the crisis and the cause-and-effect aspect that American media to a one omit. They have history in them. They are a pithy expression of Russia as a wounded civilization, to borrow Naipaul’s term for India. They brim with the *ressentiment* at the core of Putin’s project, which is to overcome a long sensation of betrayal, exclusion, and inferiority that arose as soon as Russia came into its ambition to modernize.

Putin says something important here, and not merely as it applies to Russia or the Ukraine crisis or the West’s part in it. He posits the capacity to see from the perspectives of others

as an essential 21st century project: to assume the eyes of “the Other” and then look at the world with them. He asserts that the West so far fails in this for the simple reason the West has no habit of seeing anything from anyone else’s point of view. It has never before now had to. Blind to others means blind to oneself among others.

It is not so difficult to favor this case. The French phenomenologists have made it for generations. Ryszard Kapuściński made it splendidly in the lectures published posthumously in 2003 as *The Other*. Putin simply advances the thought in another, harder-edged context. It is easy, indeed, to see how the West as well as the non-West is to benefit from this overcoming of “the West”—the idea of it—and the divided world it insists upon. But this takes a certain freedom of thought, an escape from all a Westerner is trained to think of Russia, a recognition of what our century needs if it is to work in a way the one just ended did not.

Ukraine tells us some things. Those nominated to lead the planet’s powerful nations are nowhere near equipped to understand the job before them. The intellects and imaginations, to say nothing of the nerve, are radically underdeveloped. It is not a matter of trying and failing at the task, which would bear within it some occasion for optimism. They appear wholly unaware there is any task specific to our time. And this is a different, greatly less promising thing. **CP**

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Obama’s Pitbull The Reinvention of Al Sharpton

BY YVETTE CARNELL

During the Week of May 2, it was widely reported that a rule in the Obama administration’s “My Brother’s Keeper” initiative would deny eligibility to most black organizations. The rule, as originally written, would’ve required organizations to have a presence in at least 45 states to be considered a national organization, thus disqualifying most black charities. Although the mentoring organization 100 Black Men wrote a letter to the Justice Department that resulted in a fix, conspicuously missing from the negotiations was Rev. Al Sharpton, who normally injects himself into racial controversies.

Proximity to power is everything. Sharpton keeps President Obama’s counsel. Despite Sharpton’s constant sloganeering against new Voter I.D. laws on his MSNBC show *Politics Nation*, he’s a made man now. Regardless of how vig-

orously Sharpton wags his finger in the air at 6pm sharp every evening, the point still remains that he is not an activist in any real sense of the word, and one wonders whether he has ever occupied that radical space anywhere except the imagination.

You need not possess a Sherlockian curiosity to be familiar with the Tawana Brawley fiasco or Sharpton’s past cozing up with the GOP. Even before Sharpton’s close ties with the mob were revealed by *TheSmokingGun.com*, white conservatives had him pegged as the poster child for ambulance chasing activism. For once, conservatives were right, although that never stopped them from using Sharpton as a tool to do their bidding. Yet, as Sharpton reached national prominence, white liberal critics backed into the shadows, refusing to offer any full throated criticism, and whenever the black community was faced with the question of Sharpton’s role as race leader, the response was invariably, ‘he’s not my leader.’ Despite it all, Sharpton’s star continued to rise and reached its crown when President Obama hand picked Sharpton as the go-to black leader for the first black president’s administration.

The notion that our black president, a man with “no Negro dialect”, as Sen. Harry Reid had described Obama, would anoint the loutish Sharpton as emissary to the black community was stunning. If the authors of *Double Down: Game Change 2012* were correct, then Obama likes the Congressional Black Caucus even less than the Tea Party, with the only exception being civil rights icon John Lewis. So the choice of Sharpton seemed poles apart with Obama’s political disposition.

As quickly as Sharpton was anointed, he shot wicked glances at his critics, denouncing them all not with a comprehensive list of policy prescriptions he hoped to convince the president to adopt, but with a hip-hop dis; if you had problems with Al Sharpton, then you were one among his many haters.

The still unanswered question is how did Sharpton manage a successful transition from New York rabble rouser to White House advisor? It had always been an open secret that Sharpton sought to supplant Rev. Jesse Jackson as the black community’s spokesperson. In 2000, during a skirmish between Sharpton and Jackson over a potential Burger King boycott, the *Village Voice* quoted an aide to Sharpton describing the tension: “He [Jackson] can’t allow the CEOs of white corporations to run around saying that Al Sharpton is the guy to go to in order to get black businessmen off your backs.” Rev. Sharpton had always felt that his processed head was fit for a crown, but it wasn’t until Obama elevated his stature that Sharpton’s tarnished career truly reached its zenith.

When Rev. Al Sharpton was named to replace Cenk Uygur in the MSNBC prime time slot instead of an otherwise qualified black journalist, the listserv for the National Association of Black Journalists sizzled with condemnation. Eric Deggens, a media critic at the *St. Petersburg Times*, lamented to Howard Kurtz that “We don’t have a person of color who’s really

hosting a show on any of the major cable news channels in prime time and to have that one slot go to someone who's more of an activist and not a journalist..."

Other critics were well aware that Sharpton's good fortune came soon after he'd given his blessing to an NBC/Comcast merger. Still others wondered whether Sharpton, who'd never developed a smooth relationship with the teleprompter, was even qualified for prime time. As it turned out, Sharpton wasn't ready, but to understand Sharpton is to understand that his ascent to national prominence has never been defined by qualifications or achievements because that's not how Sharpton measures himself.

In his book, *The Rejected Stone*, Sharpton says that he, a boy abandoned by his father, sought validation from elder black statesmen of the era like Congressman Adam Clayton Powell. In large part, Sharpton describes himself as an "astounding boy preacher from Brooklyn." He painstakingly details how he'd listen for hours to the sermons of preachers like C.L. Franklin and Dr. King, mimicking their style and cadence while "picking up nuances." Sharpton takes pride in his ability to parrot others, a tradition he would continue with his MSNBC show, where he would regurgitate President Obama's talking points, verbatim, as if viewers were too obtuse to notice that Sharpton's combativeness was being utilized on behalf of Obama. The boy preacher, who as a young activist proclaimed himself a sort of watchdog for the downtrodden, was on the road to becoming a pit bull for the White House.

By the mid 1980s, Sharpton's antics were garnering intense scrutiny from the *Village Voice*. During an absurd appearance on the Morton Downey Jr. Show, *Village Voice* journalist William Bastone challenged Sharpton on the existence of a tape purportedly showing the "Rev." arranging a cocaine deal. "Have you seen the tape?" Sharpton asked, to which Mr. Bastone answered, "No." Sharpton saw his opening: "Then how can you say that I on a tape willingly did something that you yourself have not seen?" Sharpton told Mr. Bastone that his sources had it all wrong and that blacks shouldn't be persuaded by Bastone or his "hippie" friends, pandering to the idea that the white media commenting on the affairs of black leaders is out of bounds. This would become a tactic of Sharpton's throughout his career when challenged by those outside the enclave of the black community.

Sharpton's formulation was to appeal to the desire of blacks, born out of a necessity, to stick together at all costs. A people who had been viciously attacked by police dogs, lynched for sport, and enslaved for profit recoiled at the "ata boy" paternalism that oozed from white supremacists and desired nothing less than self-determination as a measure of how far we'd come. Nobody knew better than Sharpton how to harness that allegiance as ammunition against his enemies and fuel for his meteoric rise to the top.

The strategy Sharpton used to fend off black critics was

far different than the one he'd employed against mainstream white critics. Whenever Sharpton was challenged from within the black community, he routinely dismissed the criticism as coming from establishment black leaders who were threatened by his encroachment on what was once their territory. In 2000, when Sharpton was beating the drums for the Burger King boycott over disagreements the fast food conglomerate was having with black franchise owner La-Van Hawkins, Sharpton grew livid after he learned that Rev. Jesse Jackson had also met with the executives at the fast food chain. Sharpton described the 'secret' meeting between Jackson and Burger King CEO Colin Storm as a traitorous act intended to undermine him. The *Village Voice* quoted Sharpton as having said that Jackson's actions "can only be interpreted as an attempt to divide the black community." The irony here is that, regardless of what you think of Rev. Jackson or his politics, he marched alongside Dr. King and was with the civil rights icon when he was gunned down. Jackson has an authentic relationship to black movement politics in this country. But here was Sharpton, the self-anointed street preacher, attempting to take Jackson to task for undermining him. By 2009, Hawkins was headed to jail, convicted of failing to pay payroll taxes, and Sharpton had managed to convince most everyone that he was the forbearer of a movement to which he could lay no claim.

Leaving aside right wing media, Rev. Sharpton's knack for shimmying to avert the media's critical gaze left plenty of room for caviling and double dipping on his part. On *Politics Nation*, Al Sharpton is sort of the black Ed Schultz, another MSNBC blowhard pundit who knows a little something about reinvention. Sharpton spends the hour railing against the GOP for everything from blocking Obamacare to enacting voter ID laws across the country. What Sharpton doesn't mention is that for a large part of his career as racial performer, he has not only partnered with the GOP and benefited from the party financially, but has also been guilty of exactly the same crimes as the GOP. This hypocrisy was on full display when President Obama recently spoke at Sharpton's National Action Network (NAN) convention.

"I want to say, first of all, thank you to your leader, Reverend Al Sharpton. Give him a big round of applause," said President Obama at the NAN convention this past April, before launching into an unrelenting attack on Republican lawmakers' voter suppression efforts. "So let's be clear -- the real voter fraud is people who try to deny our rights by making bogus arguments about voter fraud," asserted Obama.

The irony here is that, as Wayne Barrett recently noted in Salon, Sharpton himself registered to vote in three precincts in 1976 because political king makers hadn't made up their minds who they wanted him to run against. He is also alleged to have forged thousands of signatures in an effort to overturn state senator Vander Beatty's election loss. Yet even as scathing critiques are leveled against Sharpton with astound-

ing accuracy at Salon.com, the platform's editor in chief, Joan Walsh, legitimizes Sharpton with regular visits to his show. She, like many MSNBC contributors, forget that FOX News was Sharpton's favorite spot to make prime time news appearances prior to accepting a paying gig at MSNBC. Sharpton even took gasbag Bill O'Reilly to the black-owned restaurant Sylvia's, where O'Reilly proclaimed both his shock and admiration that "there wasn't one person in Sylvia's who was screaming, 'M-Fer, I want more iced tea.'"

Another striking aspect of the Sharpton-Obama partnership is that Sharpton has no affinity for politicians like Obama. President Obama carries with him nuanced views on race, born of a broad field of vision organized by the successive experience of his unique racial environments; he'd lived with his white mother in Indonesia, white grandparents in Kansas, and he'd internally grappled with what it meant to have a black Kenyan father. These various racial climates, both internal and external, shaped Obama. Rev. Sharpton, a man who brandishes race as a weapon, lacks any hint of refinement. In fact, in a 2004 *L.A. Weekly* report, Doug Ireland quotes a 1988 *Newsday* investigative piece where Sharpton inveighs against black leaders who disagreed with him by calling them "yellow n*ggers." This was not as much a shot against the vestiges of colorism, which has historically co-mingled with elitism in the black community, as it was a clarion call to replace politicians like Obama, who benefited from how they were perceived by the white establishment. Back in the 1980s, Sharpton sought to delegitimize leaders like Obama by calling into question their black bona fides, but Sharpton, a man not tethered to principles or ideals, knows that just as the winds change, so do fortunes, and so does he.

Being on stage with Obama was only one in a long line of Sharpton contradictions in a life marked by duplicity. Throughout his life, Sharpton had shapeshifted his way to becoming America's first millionaire activist. In her book, *Ella Baker & The Black Freedom Movement*, professor Barbara Ransby details the life of Baker, one of the most instrumental and acutely class aware activists of the civil rights movement. Baker understood the danger of having a movement led by only by elite black men:

"At every opportunity [Ella] Baker reiterated the radical idea that educated elites were not the natural leaders of Black people. Critically reflecting on her work with the NAACP, she observed, "The Leadership was all from the professional class, basically. I think these are the factors that have kept it [the NAACP] from moving to a more militant position."

Early on his career, Sharpton had positioned himself as a leader who was diametrically opposed to the traditional black leadership model of the NAACP and civil rights leaders like Rev. Jesse Jackson. Sharpton, however, has a rapacious appetite for the good life and critter comforts. During an interview with *60 Minutes*, Lesley Stahl described how Sharpton enjoyed eating out at a restaurant frequented by Wall Street

types. In 2004 when Sharpton ran for president, his then girlfriend, also the executive director of NAN at the time, had an appetite for \$7,000 Rolex watches and \$4,000 a night stays at hotels. This sort of lifestyle has a cost and Sharpton doesn't much care who foots the bills.

Among Sharpton's most notorious benefactors is the same Watergate trickster, Roger Stone, who led a goon squad of Bush protesters to shut down the Miami Dade recount during the Bush vs. Gore fiasco, paving the way for a two term George W. Bush administration. Stone, a long time GOP operative, provided financing and administrative support for Sharpton's 2004 campaign, presumably in exchange for Sharpton undermining his most liberal Democratic opponent. While Stone was giving Rev. Sharpton his credit card and a depositing a \$270,000 campaign loan into the candidate's bank account, Sharpton was leveling pointed attacks against then front-runner Howard Dean for having an "anti-black" agenda. Stone would later tell the *Times* that he helped "set the tone" for Sharpton's campaign. Asked by the *Village Voice* about Stone's involvement, Sharpton admitted that he'd asked Stone for help. "If he did let me use his credit card to cover NAN expenses, fine." Of course, when mainstream white journalists cried foul, Sharpton wrote the criticism off as "phony liberal paternalism."

Long before the 2004 election, Sharpton had serpented his way through the back channels of political brokering and deal making to ensure that he was kept under the employ of wealthy stakeholders. In 1986, Sharpton endorsed Republican Al D'Amato over Democrat Mark Green in New York's U.S. Senate race. And in 1994, Sharpton supported Republican George Pataki in the New York gubernatorial race. Given that history, Sharpton had the gaul in 2003, while appearing on CNN's *Crossfire*, to assert that "We have too many elephants running around with donkey jackets on."

Sharpton's usefulness has never derived from an adherence to Democratic Party ideology or even a core set of strongly held principles. His value has always been his ability to frame even the most barefaced right-wing agenda items as somehow pro-black. When explaining why he'd supported GOP candidates over Democrats, Sharpton explained in his 2001 book *Al on America* that Democrats had to be "taught a lesson." The narrative being pushed by Sharpton was that the black community was flexing its political muscle by torpedoing Democratic candidates, but to what end? The only beneficiaries of such posturing were Sharpton and his cronies, not the black community. After Sharpton supported Pataki for governor, Rev. W. Franklyn Richardson, a pastor and NAN Chair, received millions of dollars in housing subsidies.

In 2009, Sharpton was linked to charter schools when \$500,000 was funnelled to him through Education Reform Now, an advocacy group for charters. Ostensibly, Sharpton maintained that his shell organization (NAN) was given the money as payment for his involvement in a joint effort with



Barack Obama and Al Sharpton at NAN convention. Photo: AP

then New York Chancellor Joel Klein to end the achievement gap between white and black students, but that explanation doesn't stand up against Sharpton's history of supporting charters. In 2009, Sharpton even went so far as to co-author an editorial published in the *Wall Street Journal* with Klein entitled "Charter Schools Can Close Education Gap." And who could forget Sharpton's headline tour with former Republican House Speaker Newt Gingrich? How can the man who slammed the Democratic Party for having too many elephants dressed in donkey jackets slip in and out of the bed with said elephants without raising a stir? Easy. By employing his skills as a racial provocateur. "In Detroit, just 34% of black males manage to graduate," wrote Sharpton and Klein in *WSJ* op-ed. For Sharpton, every issue he boldly embraces is always about saving black people, except black people are never saved, although pockets are filled.

Embracing Republican lawmakers, supporting charter schools, voter fraud; any one of these three would normally have routed a Democratic activist out of politics, but somehow, Rev. Sharpton withstood the criticism long enough to become point man for the White House. While serving the Obama administration, Sharpton turned the word activism on its head. At its most basic, the job of an activist is to

amplify the voice of the people to those in power. Sharpton, however, amplifies the voice of Obama to anyone who listens to his radio show or watches him on MSNBC. Sharpton, who once held himself up as a man willing to stand up to powerful interests on behalf of all black people, now stands up to all people on behalf of one black man.

President Obama's former chief of staff Rahm Emanuel has closed 50 public schools in Chicago alone, replacing many of them with privatized charter schools, including a selective enrollment school to be named after President Barack Obama. Under Obama, banks that extracted billions in U.S. and global wealth were deemed Too-Big-to-Fail and culpable bank executives escaped without ever having to make that dreaded perp walk. In Ron Suskind's book *Confidence Men*, Suskind details how Obama completely folded when meeting with 13 of the world's most powerful finance men and lobbyists. Even given their immense power, these financiers were now at their most vulnerable, but instead of pouncing on the opportunity, Obama did what he does best, ingratiate himself to men in power. "I'm not out there to go after you, I'm protecting you," Obama was quoted as having said. It doesn't end there. As the Obama administration increases the budget for the Bureau of Prisons, HSBC bank was recently caught laun-

dering billions in drug money and got off with a fine. Reform in Detroit has led to black disenfranchisement and Obama's Education Department unilaterally pulled the rug out from under Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) with new credit requirements.

If all of this had happened under a white president, Sharpton would probably still be chained to the White House gate or laid out prostrate across the front lawn. Remember, Sharpton is the same man who incited a murder after one young New York black man was hit by an ambulance driven by a Hasidic driver. Sharpton called Jews "diamond merchants" with "the blood of innocent babies" on their hands and amid that toxic rhetoric a Hasidic student visiting from another country was murdered. Sharpton has come to the rescue of individual blacks for some of the most dubious reasons; consider how he aggressively defended Tawana Brawley even when evidence revealed her story was a hoax. However, now that he has an open invitation to the White House, his bellicose roar is mute, unless of course the White House has talking points that require a wider distribution.

Part of Sharpton's genius has always been his ability to rally blacks against the forces of white supremacy. Sharpton's achilles heel has always been that his reaction to race is based on a binary view which posits white authority against black victimhood. For him, there is no in-between, except that Obama is in-between, in every conceivable way. Sharpton, a man who'd hustled payday car loans as late as 2004, did not have the sharpness of mind or strength of conviction required to set the terms for a working relationship with the first black president. Sharpton was too busy being delighted that he had, at long last, replaced Rev. Jesse Jackson as race man at the White House. Sharpton had been gifted a position of high esteem which served to rehabilitate his career. For Obama, the choice of Sharpton as liaison to the black community was cunning. In choosing, Sharpton, the Obama administration had chosen someone who most of America didn't take seriously, thus signaling to powerful stakeholders that black interests would be given no more attention under Obama than any previous administration. So Obama was able to become the first president in 40 years without a black agenda. If your desire was to render the black community's agenda rudderless, this was a match made in heaven.

Of all the scandals that stood to disrupt the Obama-Sharpton relationship over the past 6 years, the FBI informant scandal stood the best chance. Although Sharpton believed he'd laid accusations about his stint as an FBI informant to rest by distraction and deflection on that Morton Downey Jr. stage so many years ago, he was wrong. Reporters are tenacious. Mr. Bastone, formerly of the *Village Voice* and now at TheSmokingGun.com, knew he'd been right all those many years ago and this time, he set out to prove it once and for all.

With federal documents, Bastone proved that Sharpton had been a paid FBI informant who spied on the Genovese crime

family. Sharpton maintained that he was a "cat, not a rat", even though an NYPD cop said they'd nicknamed him "the fat rat", and that he'd become an informant only to protect himself. The problem is that Sharpton's series of events don't withstand scrutiny. As The Smoking Gun notes, Sharpton claimed he'd been threatened by music mobster Salvatore Pisello, so why'd he end up secretly recording another mobster, Joseph "Joe Bana" Buonanno? The more likely explanation is that Sharpton was flipped during a recorded cocaine deal and forced to act as an informant or be exposed as a double dealing huckster.

The question that wasn't asked nearly enough when the news broke of Sharpton's work with the FBI was how Sharpton, a preacher, became so close with mobsters that they were comfortable meeting with him 10 times and sharing incriminating information with him? The question for the Obama administration was how a former mob affiliate turned rat became so friendly with the White House?

When the news broke of Sharpton's criminal affiliations, I was sure it was the long overdue death knell for Sharpton's career. Sharpton's former friend, drug trafficker Robert Curington, told the *New York Post* that Sharpton had taken the bait and "just wanted the money" from the cocaine deal. In Sharpton's case, the shoe had always fit, and at long last, he'd be forced to wear it, or so I thought. In my haste I'd forgotten that both cats and rats are adept at scurrying out of harm's way. Although it is true that Sharpton's star is diminished, as evidenced by his failed attempts to insert himself into the scandal surrounding Clippers owner Donald Sterling, he's not done yet.

The Donald Sterling controversy perfectly captures the hypocrisy that has come to symbolize Sharpton's career. Before Sterling was banned from the NBA, Sharpton boasted to TMZ that he was threatening a boycott at the Clippers playoff game if Sterling wasn't suspended, as if anyone cared. Even though the head of the league had hired Clinton operatives to manage damage control and the NBA players union had brought Sacramento mayor and ex-Phoenix Suns star Kevin Johnson on board, Sharpton continued to inject himself into a situation that was already well managed. As Sharpton tried to insert himself into the controversy, the Los Angeles chapter of the NAACP was trying to get out from under it. The civil rights organization had given Sterling one award and was preparing to give him another, even though Sterling had been forced into a settlement for discriminating against African-Americans, when news of his racially inflammatory comments broke. Guess who was scheduled to get an NAACP award alongside Sterling that night? Rev. Al Sharpton. In true Sharpton fashion, he was one week preparing to break bread with Sterling and protesting him the next. And so it goes. **CP**

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NAFTA's Dirty Secrets

The Unbearable Burden of Free Trade Agreements

By DAVID MACARAY

"NAFTA means jobs. American jobs, and good-paying American jobs. If I didn't believe that, I wouldn't support this agreement." –Bill Clinton, December 8, 1993

One could say that "free trade" is to economics what pantheism is to religion. It's almost impossible to overemphasize or exaggerate the cultural, economic and political effects of trade. Not only does the willingness to trade—the impulse to swap possessions—seem to reside in all of us, but the extent to which commercial trade (including slave-trading) has shaped world history is undeniable.

Centuries before there was anything resembling formal "agreements," trade was already active. Even before the domestication of the camel (which occurred in approximately 2,500 B.C.) gave Arab traders the ability to travel to the Far East in pursuit of silk and spices, people were already trading with each other. Buddhism reached southern India in the 6th century B.C. not by traveling missionaries, but by the crews of cargo ships.

It has been argued that an economic history of the world is far more revealing than, say, an intellectual history, or a geopolitical history, or a religious history. That's because economics tends to trump everything, including ideology. It's been said that if one wants to understand what matters to people—what motivates them, drives them, tantalizes them—you don't "follow the ideas," you follow the money. As demoralizing as that may be, it's probably true.

Consider two ends of the trade spectrum. At one extreme, going back thousands of years, two men agree to swap a fur pelt for a sharpened stone. They come away pleased because both felt the trade had been personally advantageous. As primitive as this example is, it could be said to represent "commerce" in its purest, most satisfactory form, and anyone who tried to prohibit such an exchange would be guilty of undue interference.

At the other end of the spectrum are today's grandiose trade agreements, where industrialized and emerging nations join together for mutual profit. Yet, as attractive as "free trade agreements" are in principle, they are still regarded as risky, largely because people realize there are trade-offs involved. On the one hand, industrialized countries want to protect their standard of living, and on the other, they recognize the obvious advantages of importing low-cost consumer goods.

These issues have concerned the U.S. since we became a republic. The following is from Section I of the landmark

Tariff of 1789: "Whereas it is necessary for the support of government, for the discharge of the debts of the United States, and the encouragement and protection of manufacturers, that duties be laid on goods, wares, and merchandise." James Madison's advice? Be open to trade, but don't be afraid to protect what's yours. Proceed with caution.

But the end of the Cold War, coupled with our embrace of the meme—"globalization" (how easily the word rolls off our tongue)—ushered in a new era in commerce. Under the guise of helping American workers and "empowering" the laborers of Third World nations, globalization unleashed a torrent of get-rich-quick schemes, all with an international flavor. Where reasonable tariffs and protectionism were once considered evidence of patriotism, they were now being depicted as the Devil's work.

Yet, despite all the hype and propaganda, trade agreements are still suspect, still met with a nagging sense of unease. Perhaps this reflects a cynicism borne of decades of disappointment and disillusionment, or perhaps it's a reaction to the faint echo of "trickle-down economics," the bizarre theory popularized in the 1980s that suggested, with a straight face, that what helps the rich will ultimately help the rest of us.

This sense of unease is not unfounded. Judging by what the American worker has seen so far, not only have these trade agreements done little to help, they have made workers far more vulnerable. Still, even with the wide-spread skepticism and unease, the gears continue turning. With each passing decade, the world's economic treaties seem to become more ambitious and far-reaching.

Also, it should be noted that while these trade agreements are referred to as "treaties," they aren't literal treaties. Ratification of a treaty requires a two-majority of Congress. By contrast, trade agreements require a simple majority. For example, had NAFTA required two-thirds mandate, it wouldn't have passed.

We are now being told that, while these trade agreements may have hurt *working people*, they did, in fact, help the *economy*, which seems weirdly paradoxical. Saying something is "good" for the economy but "bad" for the workers? Really? Isn't that a bit like saying the surgery was a success, but the patient died?

Predictably, proponents of "free trade" fall back on the excuse that the tangible benefits of these agreements are going to require more time to reveal themselves. That has not only become their default position, it's what they are now saying about NAFTA. Don't judge us too quickly, they say, because in order for NAFTA to spread its wings and fully realize its potential might require as long as 50 years.

As convenient a cop-out as that may be, no one who pushed for NAFTA in the early 1990s ever hinted that it might take half a century to bear fruit. In fact, they (including President Clinton) said the exact opposite, insisting its benefits would be seen immediately. In regard to unfulfilled promises, these

pie-in-the-sky trade agreements are reminiscent of the 5-Year Plans of the former USSR. A rosy and prosperous future was always and forever just five years away.

Consider this: On January 1, 1994, the day NAFTA became law, the stock market stood at a modest 3,756. On January 1, 2014, twenty years later, the market stood at 16,441. People who can afford to invest their money fantasize about getting a solid 10-12% annual return on their investments. Over the course of those twenty post-NAFTA years, the stock market has increased by more than 435%.

If the stock market were the sole criterion by which to assess the health of the economy, then yes, things have never been better. But we know that's not true. We know the gap between rich and poor is growing, that the middle-class is shrinking, and that from 1973 to 2011 the median wage (in real dollars) rose less than 5%. The stock market only tells us how well the *investors* are doing. And who are those investors? Alas, many of them are the folks who brought us NAFTA.

It goes without saying that the signatories to trade agreements expect the results to be beneficial. They expect them to help. Otherwise, why sign on to them? Unless it's the result of force or intimidation (e.g., Commodore Perry chugging into Tokyo Bay, in 1853, with four U.S. warships, insisting Japan open itself to trade with the West), no one signs on to these things if they think they will hurt rather than help them.

That being the case, how do we account for those agreements that were approached optimistically and enthusiastically, but turned out badly for one or more of the parties? How do we explain agreements that "hurt" the majority of the people? Presumably, the answer has to be either: (1) Things don't always work out exactly as planned, or (2) the planners who designed these treaties never really intended them to do what they were advertised to do.

Take NAFTA, for example. Perhaps its results aren't as "disappointing" as claimed, at least not to the people who designed it. Perhaps to the people who designed NAFTA, it yielded precisely the results that were hoped for. As for helping the majority of American workers, well, that was never really part of the plan. Think about it. Had helping working people been part of the plan, then working people would have been invited to sit at the table. But they weren't. Lobbyists were.

Broadly speaking, there are only two ways that the working class can benefit from trade agreements: (1) The treaties result in an increase in jobs (jobs created in the manufacturing sector to fulfill the increased demand for our manufactured goods), or (2) they result in a decrease in the price of foreign-made consumer goods pouring into the country, sufficient to *off-set* the loss of jobs.

Let us consider textiles. No Americans have been hurt more by trade agreements than those previously working in the textile industry. In 1965, 95% of all clothing purchased by Americans was made in the U.S. By 2009, it was *less than 5%*.

While one can now buy a decent shirt for a just few dollars, it raises the question: Does the savings of a few dollars on a garment off-set the eradication of an entire industry?

In the 1960s, it's doubtful any congressman—particularly one who advocated lower tariffs—told the American public that, once we began importing foreign apparel, our textile industry would be brought to its knees. That's not how you get a treaty passed, and it's not how you get re-elected. Granted, it's possible the proponents of apparel imports had no idea it would result in the ruination of an industry. Still, would it have mattered had they known?

Take the U.S.-Chile Free Trade Agreement (FTA), which became law on January 1, 2004. It was described thusly: "The U.S.-Chile FTA eliminates tariffs and opens markets, reduces barriers for trade in services, provides protection for intellectual property, ensures regulatory transparency, guarantees nondiscrimination in the trade of digital products, commits the Parties to maintain competition laws that prohibit anti-competitive business conduct, and requires effective labor and environmental enforcement."

That's about as glowing a description as you'll ever find. It "reduces barriers" (who likes barriers?), ensures "transparency" (who likes secrecy?), "guarantees nondiscrimination" (all men should be free) and "requires effective labor and environmental enforcement" (effective is always better than "ineffective"). The phony vitality of that language suggests it could have been written by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

That last part—the part about requiring "effective labor and environmental enforcement"—is particularly misleading. The United States has been a constitutional republic for 227 years, and yet we, as a country, are still struggling with those very issues, still engaged in a constant battle with those interests who seek to dilute, circumvent, ignore or repeal our existing labor and environmental laws.

Although we continue to catch violators of federal and state labor and environmental laws, the Department of Labor and Department of Justice admit they are catching only a small percentage of the offenders. There are simply too many of them, and too few resources available. Not only are businesses constantly on the lookout for loopholes and shortcuts, there are those who blatantly commit felonies in the belief they won't get caught.

If a venerable, 227-year old republic like ours—with more laws on the books than Legos has bricks—can't enforce its labor and environmental statutes, what's a country like Chile expected to do? Nothing against Chile, but how can they pretend that these issues will be addressed? Labor activists in Latin America are not only being harassed, they're being murdered. *We* know it and *they* know it, and all the rhetoric in the world won't change that.

Maybe the answer lies in not being so picky. Maybe we should excuse some of our less "effective" trading partners, in return for them "helping" our economy. After all, "help" is

valuable. But, in 2009, five years after the Chilean FTA went into effect, U.S. exports to Chile actually *decreased* by 26%. What happened to the “help”? Apparently, even Chile wasn’t interested in buying what we had to sell. Still, somebody was making money because the stock market continued to rise.

Actually, there’s an awkward component to this debate, one we haven’t considered. Looking to protect both the environment and workers’ rights, lawmakers have insisted that these treaties contain some fairly stringent provisions. And while engaged “liberals” may have their doubts about enforcement of these provisions, workers in developing nations come at it from an entirely different angle. Third World workers see these “restrictions” as a form of discrimination.

Former Secretary of Labor Robert Reich has noted that every industrial nation went through its own “sweatshop” phase. When people in rural areas first took jobs in towns and cities, there was a period where they worked in substandard factories for low pay.

You don’t transition from an agricultural economy to an industrial economy without

growing pains. This clash between social progressivism and economic survival is not alien to the American labor movement. When organized labor (and not the Congress or the Church) first sought to outlaw child labor, there was significant resistance from poor American families whose survival depended on children bringing home that extra money. As “humanitarian” as it was to prohibit children from toiling in factories, these kids had become a vital source of income.

Reich’s observation may be accurate as far as it goes, but it invites a counter argument. The fact that so much has changed in the world between then (with nations struggling to become industrial centers) and now (with multi-national corporations spreading their tentacles and calling the shots) renders his observation largely irrelevant.

The sweatshops Reich alludes to were not only “independent” entities, they were part of a natural and incremental rural-to-industrial evolution. But today’s mega-factory “ghettos” bear little resemblance to that. Today’s shoe and apparel com-

panies set up shop in poor countries, only to pull up stakes at the first sign of increased labor costs or union awareness, guaranteeing that instead of an evolution, there’s a rapacious harvesting of an industry.

At this juncture, let us consider two specific trade agreements. One is an ambitious treaty still in the process of completing negotiations, and the other is one we’ve already briefly discussed, a notorious treaty from 20 years ago. They are the TPP (Trans-Pacific Partnership) and NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement).

Two disturbing things about the TPP immediately jump out at us: The negotiations are shrouded in secrecy, which is alarming, and everyone involved with it is in a hurry to get it passed. Everyone involved with this tramp wants to see it “fast-tracked,” which is worrisome because it appears they

want it passed before the opposition can mount an offensive.

Yet, even with very few of the treaty’s specifics having leaked out, one thing is absolutely certain. If and when a fully formed TPP becomes law, it will be the most ambitious and far-reaching trade



Inside a “maquiladora” near Juarez City. Photo: Beyond Borders.

agreement in the history of the world. That much we already know. The TPP will be the Mother of All Trade Agreements.

Originally established in 2005 by four countries (Brunei, Chile, New Zealand and Singapore), and going by the cumbersome name of “Trans-Pacific Strategic Economic Partnership Agreement,” the agreement initially called for a 90% reduction in tariffs in member countries by 2006, and the elimination of all tariffs and protectionism by 2015.

The TPP has gained tremendous momentum, and by all accounts, hasn’t been significantly hampered by public or political opposition. Since the U.S. formally joined negotiations, a number of other countries have signed on as well, giving this agreement a promiscuous open-endedness one doesn’t find in other trade agreements.

But why the secrecy? Supporters say it’s protocol, that until the terms are precisely known, they need to be kept under wraps. Of course, with everything being secret, it’s hard for opponents to attack specifics of the proposal. While compa-

nies (Halliburton, Comcast, Chevron, et al) have been given access to the details, the majority of Congress has not. And of course, the AFL-CIO is not allowed near this bad boy.

A key concern is the role of “investor-state” dispute settlements. Typically, treaties like TPP give investors the right to sue a foreign government if that government is believed to have breached the treaty. At first blush, that seems eminently fair. Each side is expected to hold up its end of the deal. If investors had no way of enforcing the provisions of an economic treaty, why would they consider being party to one?

But advocacy groups argue that these “investor-state” mechanisms tend to work against long-term improvements in the environment, labor law, and human rights protections. Governments will do anything they can to avoid being sued, including taking liberties with environmental integrity and squelching any union organizing drives. In emerging nations particularly, human rights concerns are going to be eclipsed by market forces.

As for NAFTA, what can be said that hasn’t already been said? Its pitiful record is what’s partly responsible for public skepticism aimed at the TPP. Not only can we all recall the glowing predictions for NAFTA, but we’re now hearing similar predictions for the TPP. In 1993, the Peterson Institute for International Economics predicted that NAFTA would create 170,000 U.S. jobs by 1995. President Clinton predicted 200,000 new jobs by 1996. Neither came close to happening.

In 1993, one year before NAFTA became law, the U.S. had a trade *surplus* with Mexico of \$2.5 billion. In 1993, we had a trade *deficit* of \$29 billion with Canada. As of 2012, the *combined deficit* with our NAFTA trading partners reached an astounding \$180 billion. It was also predicted that Mexico’s post-NAFTA economy would grow by 4-5% a year. In the 20 years since NAFTA, Mexico’s per capita gross domestic product grew *less than 1%*.

Not surprisingly, the Peterson Institute is on the march again, boldly predicting that the TPP will result in nearly \$2 trillion in increased revenue, a figure they likely pulled out of the air. Still, who really cares if these wildly optimistic predictions are wrong? Once the ink is dry and the agreement becomes law, it doesn’t matter if the predictions were wrong. They already got what they wanted.

It’s also been widely reported that with U.S. subsidized corn pouring into Mexico, an estimated 4 million Mexican farmers have been driven out of business, driven off their family farms, forced to work as temp farmers, or to seek jobs in the *maquiladoras* (factories on the U.S.-Mexican border created exclusively for exporting manufactured goods), or to emigrate to the U.S.

Creating a staggering increase in illegal immigration is one of NAFTA’s dirty little secrets. For entirely understandable reasons, illegal immigration to the U.S. has soared since NAFTA became law, and there’s no shortage of bitter irony in that. How does one say *maquiladora* in Mandarin?

Of course, all those fears about the Mexican border factories decimating our manufacturing sector turned out to be misplaced. Those jobs ultimately went to China, not Mexico. Not only did this leave many Americans without decent jobs, but with their own factory work vanishing, and farming no longer viable, it left Mexican laborers with little choice but to seek employment in the U.S.

As for that cheap genetically modified U.S. corn now flowing into Mexico—the subsidized corn that enriched U.S. agribusiness and drove millions of Mexicans off their farms—it not only didn’t benefit consumers, it victimized them. It gouged them. *Public Citizen* reported that during the first 10 years of NAFTA, the price of corn tortillas nearly *tripled*.

People tend to play down the fact that, even with the boosterism and propaganda that preceded NAFTA, there was considerable opposition to it, not only in the U.S., but in Canada. The anti-free trade movement was the single most important factor in Canada’s 1988 election. Still disappointed with the 1987 Canada-U.S. FTA, more Canadians voted against so-called “free trade” than voted for it.

Canadian votes split between two anti-free trade parties (the Liberals and the New Democrats), allowed the pro-free trade Progressive Conservatives to gain seats in Parliament. But in 1993, the Liberal Party, led by Jean Chrétien, was swept into office, defeating PC prime minister Kim Campbell. Chrétien campaigned on the promise to renegotiate or outright dissolve the impending NAFTA agreement, evidence of just how much opposition there was among Canadians.

In the U.S., there was similar opposition. The AFL-CIO, Ross Perot, Ralph Nader, Pat Buchanan, and environmental groups lobbied hard against its passage, despite four living U.S. presidents (Ford, Carter, Reagan, and George H.W. Bush) publicly endorsing it. With those former presidents on board, free market fundamentalists were given a second wind. Anyone who opposed NAFTA was now portrayed as short-sighted, ignorant or even “racist.”

NAFTA was passed in the House by a vote of 234-200, with 102 Democrats voting in favor. It passed the Senate by a vote of 61-38, with 27 Democrats voting in favor. Whether done for sleazy political reasons or not, those House Democrats deserve some credit for opposing President Clinton. Unfortunately, like Clinton, Obama continues to stump for FTAs that the majority of his own party view as harmful.

The U.S.-Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement Implementation Act (TPAIA), passed the House, 262-167, with House Democrats opposing it, 158-31. The U.S.-Panama TPAIA passed the House, 300-129, with Democrats opposing it, 123-66. And the U.S.-Korea TPAIA passed the House, 278-151, with Democrats opposing it, 130-59. All were signed by President Obama, and all were overwhelmingly rejected by his own party.

Still, even with trade agreements hurting the working class and favoring the oligarchies, and even with the Supreme

Court's *Citizens United* and *McCutcheon vs. Federal Election Commission* decisions—rulings that give corporate interests the keys to the kingdom—it's not all bad news.

If you're a working man or woman who has watched their wages and benefits erode, there is one thing in which you can take solace. While your standard of living, earning power, and hopes and dreams for a better future are disintegrating, you can rejoice in the fact that the economy, thank God, seems to be improving. **CP**

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movement and its relevance to our campaign. Then the lead organizer Kimberley Lawson took the stage. An excellent organizer and an inspiring individual, she introduced the last speaker: It was Bernie Sanders, then Vermont's Congressman. The applause was stupendous. Chants of *Bernie! Bernie!* filled the room. After five minute applause, Bernie began. It was a good, if standard, stump speech about the rights of workers and the need for the university administration and Board of trustees to do the right thing and recognize the union.

Two years later, in spring of 1999, Bill Clinton was under fire in Congress for his misguided and manipulative dalliance-



Bernard Sanders on the Daily Show.

Prophet of False Hope? The Trouble With Bernie

BY RON JACOBS

In the spring of 1997, a drive to form a union amongst the housekeeping, bookstore, landscaping and trades workers at the University of Vermont (UVM) was well underway. The United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers union (UE) had been enlisted to help those of us in the UVM work force working on the union drive get organized. Their abilities had helped us move quickly and gain numerous signatures on cards. On March 8, 1997 International Women's Day, we held a union rally. It was very well attended. The speakers built a crescendo of assent. I was on the list and gave a brief talk about the importance of the date for the U.S. union

es with Monica Lewinsky. The Dayton Accords concerning the growing civil war in Yugoslavia had created the intended scenario, leading Belgrade to insist on its historical right to keep Kosovo under its governance. In response, Washington and other NATO governments began an intensive bombing campaign. Bill Clinton and his war cabinet began an around-the-clock assault on the Serbian people. Liberals and progressives drank the kool-aid and offered their whole hearted support. Bernie Sanders made it clear he was completely on board with the action. Indeed, after antiwar activists in Burlington, Vermont marched through downtown stopping at the offices of each Senator and ending at Sanders' office where they staged a sit-in, Bernie instructed his office staff via telephone to call the police and clear the office. A week later at an emergency town meeting on the bombing in Montpelier, Vermont Sanders showed up with staff members and a panel

of pro and antiwar speakers. Bernie vehemently defended the bombing and actually told at least two members of the audience to leave if they didn't like what he was saying.

September 2001. After thousands of people are killed in the World Trade Center and Pentagon, President George W. Bush and Congress declared war on Afghanistan. Sanders joined the bandwagon and voted to adopt the joint resolution that authorized the President to authorize military force against anyone involved with the attacks of September 11, 2001 and any nation that harbors these individuals. In October 2002, after two years of war on the people of Afghanistan and a series of lies and misinformation, Congress and the White House (with help from Great Britain and a couple other governments) ignored the United Nations and world opinion and invaded Iraq. While Sanders voted against the original authorization to use military force against Iraq, he followed that vote with several subsequent votes authorizing funding of that war and the debacle in Afghanistan. The other piece of legislation passed that long ago September was the PATRIOT Act. Like the vote that sent troops to Afghanistan, that legislation changed the U.S. forever. To his credit, Sanders voted against the original PATRIOT Act legislation and attempted to curtail its effect in subsequent votes. However, in 2006, he voted *Yea* on legislation that made the remaining fourteen provisions of the PATRIOT Act permanent and extended the authority of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to conduct "roving wiretaps" and access certain business records through December 31, 2009. In a similar vein, Sanders voted against the original legislation that created the Department of Homeland Security, but by 2006 he had joined the majority of Congress in passing continued funding of that agency.

In 2008, Sanders was elected to the Senate. This transition gave Bernie a salary boost with potentially even less power than that he had in the House. His voting record changed little: voting for some war authorization funds while opposing others; funding intelligence operations while voting to remove immunity for communication companies involved in government surveillance; supporting contraception funding and funding for children's health insurance programs; and opposing John Brennan as head of the CIA while supporting Chuck Hagel's appointment as Secretary of Defense. He continued authorizing grants and loans to Israel, even after Israel bombed Gaza, attacked the Mavi Marmara and supported illegal settlements in the West Bank. Most recently, Sanders joined ninety-seven others and approved a \$1 billion aid package to the coup government in Ukraine, a package that (when combined with International Monetary Fund loans) will most certainly further impoverish Ukrainian working people.

Beginning in 2010, Vermonters became aware that the Air National Guard base in Burlington was one of the top choices of the Pentagon to base the multimillion dollar F-35 fighter plane. Immediately, citizens began organizing against that

possibility. Some members of the organizing group thought Sanders might be in support of their position. They were quickly disappointed. Indeed, as the campaign against the F-35s being based in Vermont grew, Senator Sanders support for the idea grew stronger and more adamant. By October 2012, after a series of victories by opponents of the plane, Sanders stated in part, "I'm very proud of the role that the Vermont National Guard has played in our state and I do not want to see that role diminished or eliminated ...The F-35, whether one may like it or not, is the plane of choice not only for the U.S. Air Force, but for the Navy, Marines and much of NATO. If the F-35 ends up not being located here, it will end up at a National Guard base in Florida or South Carolina. I would rather it be here." As I wrote in an article after the Pentagon announced it had chosen Burlington to base the planes (VTDigger: The Pentagon gets what it wants (again)1/15/2014), "There is an alternative to the cynical attitude that rationalizes taking blood money since, after all, somebody will and it might as well be Vermont."

If one believes Sanders' fans, they expected him to be the politician who would create that alternative. Indeed, there are still those who excuse his failure to do so, even in Vermont where they should know better. After all, as the summary above of his voting record suggests, Bernie Sanders is if nothing else a shrewd politician. Like his colleague currently in the White House, Sanders campaigns on progressive and populist themes. Unlike Mr. Obama, however, Sanders usually sticks to his positions on issues relating to labor, veterans, children, corporate cheats, and certain social issues (marriage equality, for example.) However, when it comes to matters of war and peace, his record is at best a mixed bag and, more likely, representative of his ideas on how the United States can maintain its imperial role forever (or at least for a long, long time.)

Senator Sanders is often called a socialist in the mainstream and progressive media. While this may have been true once, it would be hard for even the most generous reader of Karl Marx to honestly say this was still the case. It is not my plan here to argue for or against Sanders' socialism, though. However, the history of socialism in the U.S. includes adamant anti-imperialists like Eugene Debs, who went to prison for opposing the World War I and his counterpart Meyer London, who supported U.S. entry into that imperialist maelstrom. The situation during World War II was of course different, given the fascist enemy. However, there were those who remained stoutly antiwar during that conflict, too. All U.S. wars involve a defense of the capitalist economy and, consequently, a belief in that economy's superiority. Bernie Sanders actions make it clear he shares that belief.

After the bombing of Yugoslavia had ended and the U.S. plan to Balkanize the Balkans neared its completion, I received many emails and calls regarding the aforementioned sit-in at Bernie's office and the protesters' opposition to his

politics of war. Most of these messages came from outside of Vermont and considered what the protesters did to be counterproductive. After all, the messages stated, Sanders went to Chiapas to support the Zapatistas and he's against the various free trade agreements and the WTO. He's more of an ally than a foe, isn't he? My answer to these challenges is that I'm not sure. So called progressive politicians who do not draw the link between corporate America's wars and its attack on social security, health care, the minimum wage, forty- hour work week, and other issues working people consider important are doing us a disservice. The wars fought by the U.S. military are ultimately fought for one reason only: To maintain and expand the power of corporate America at the expense of workers and the poor around the world.

As neoliberal writer Thomas Friedman wrote during the bombing of Serbia and Kosovo, "McDonald's cannot flourish without McDonnell Douglas, the builder of the F-15. And the hidden fist that keeps the world safe for Silicon Valley's technologies is called the United States Army, Air Force Navy and Marine Corps." (New York Times 3/29/1999) Sanders must understand the connection. Hence, his support for those elements of the war machine that allow him to support labor in the manner he does.

The deeper question here is not whether Bernie Sanders is the progressive savior so many people want him to be. Instead, it is whether or not such a politician can even exist in the United States. I am one of the first to admit that Sanders' record on labor, veterans, and most civil liberties issues is decent, especially for someone who is part of the ruling elite (even if he doesn't see himself that way.) However, this fact is probably irrelevant. The system in place in the Executive Branch is implacable and essentially without redemption. Barack Obama's two terms should make it clear to any but his most fervent supporters the truth of this statement. With the exception of a very few social issues, Obama has done very little to distance himself from his right wing predecessor or the neoliberal champion Bill Clinton who preceded Bush. In part, this is certainly because Obama is not a leftist or even a progressive. The primary reason, though, is because politicians who do not agree with the U.S. insistence on military superiority and economic hegemony rarely get to Washington, much less to the White House.

On a related note, electoral politics in today's United States tend to be the least effective way to create social and economic justice. The political power of the corporate-financial-military nexus is so pervasive, especially in the world of elections, few leftist candidates stand a chance even in municipal politics. Liberals like Sanders are few and far between on the national stage. That being said, if Sanders does run for president, he should do so as an independent. Regarding this question, a column by Tom Hayden (of SDS and Chicago 7 notoriety), appeared recently on *The Nation* magazine's website. In the article titled "Bernie Sanders

Could Be the 2016 Democratic Candidate We've All Been Waiting For"(Nation.com 5/14/2014), Hayden supports the idea that Sanders run as a Democrat in the hope that his campaign will push the Democrats supporting Hilary Clinton to the left. Hayden mentions the Jackson campaigns of the 1980s, writing "that the Democrats are stronger if their progressive wing is strengthened against the Wall Street wing of the party." However, the fate of Jesse Jackson in the 1980s and Dennis Kucinich the past couple decades more accurately describes the true fate of progressives who take a bite from the Democrats' poisoned apple.

In a John Nichols interview with Sanders that appeared in *The Nation* April 7, 2014 print issue, the Jesse Jackson campaign of 1984 is also mentioned as a template for Bernie's potential presidential run. As anyone involved in that campaign might remember, Jackson's progressive and populist politics were succeeding beyond his (and his supporters) dreams. Then the establishment moved in. Anti-Palestinian and big business donors and media commentators took a private comment made by Jackson out of context and splashed it across the pages and television screens of America. Soon, his chances of winning the Democratic Party nomination were gone. Instead, the party limped out of San Francisco that summer with the Cold War liberal Walter Mondale as its loser candidate.

The mention of Jesse Jackson by these two writers reminded me of Bertram Gross's classic 1980 text on U.S. politics and the power elites titled *Friendly Fascism*. In between discussing the nature of fascism, the likelihood it will come to the United States, and the growth of the corporate state, Gross discusses what happens to "anti-establishment" candidates that might reach the White House. The candidates he had in mind as examples were George McGovern and, Jimmy Carter (yes, Jimmy Carter was considered extremely liberal and anti-establishment in 1976.)

In the rare instance that such a candidate did get elected President and did not change his tune to harmonize with Wall Street and the Pentagon, Gross suggests that, ultimately, the person would be killed by those whose interests were threatened. Even without the conspiratorial angle, the reality of U.S. politics in the current age is that any progressive in a position of power must temper their left-leaning politics if they want to keep their power. The more powerful their position, the more compromise that's required.

The anecdotes related above suggest Bernie Sanders understands this all too well and acts accordingly. So, even if one might believe President Bernie Sanders could bring us back from the edge of a conservative free-fall, the very nature of the U.S. economic and political system ensures that he can not. **CP**

RON JACOBS lives in Vermont and is the author of the novel *All the Sinners, Saints*.

CULTURE & REVIEWS

Ruptured Norms The Early Rock Docs of D.A. Pennebaker

BY KIM NICOLINI

I recently attended a screening of D.A. Pennebaker's *Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars* (1973). When I left the theater, I felt exhilarated, like I had just been transported in time and experienced something exceptionally real. The movie was filmed over forty years ago, but I felt like I was *there* now. It was an immersive experience. Footage of the musicians, audience, environment, lighting, and sound captured a specific historical moment. Following the screening, I revisited Pennebaker's early rock documentaries—*Don't Look Back* (1967) which follows Bob Dylan during his 1965 last acoustic concert and *Monterey Pop* (1968) which chronicles the Summer of Love concert that brought Jimi Hendrix and Janis Joplin to the forefront of pop music. I wanted to experience the three films together as a time capsule in rock history.

"Experience" is what defines these films. Pennebaker's cinema-verite filmmaking unobtrusively records these events so we feel like we are *there*. He moves from Dylan's unique brand of pop activism to the fleeting moment of the Summer of Love and finishes with Bowie as Ziggy Stardust and the Glam movement. In this journey, Pennebaker's montage approach moves beyond the music. His mind-bending cuts and wipes put sensory perception ahead of linear story-telling. These films chronicle a moment in rock history when drugs and social upheaval collided with commercial and political interests, so Pennebaker's untraditional approach reflects the time.

What is missing from Pennebaker's

record is the illusion-shattering *Gimme Shelter* (1970). Conceived by the Rolling Stones to create chaos and capture it on film, their concert at Altamont Pass was shot by the Maysles brothers. The movie captured the murder of a black man named Meredith Hunter by the Hells Angels on film and marked a significant historical shift from 60s idealism to the screaming and unapologetic music that would more realistically portray a world of war, violence and racism. Pennebaker was approached by the Stones to film the Altamont concert, but he refused.

However, Albert Maysles had worked as a cameraman and cinematographer for *Monterey Pop*. Both the Maysles and Pennebaker lacked knowledge of their subjects prior to filming them. The Maysles didn't know the Stones, and Pennebaker didn't know Dylan, the musicians at Monterey Pop, or David Bowie. In fact, Monterey Pop was the American debut of groundbreaking artists like Jimi Hendrix and the Who. Not only had Pennebaker not seen them, but neither had a vast majority of the audience.

Pennebaker's naiveté in relation to his subjects allowed him to make beautifully experiential films. He had no preconceptions. He was a man with a camera documenting a moment. He threw the camera into the middle of the scene—a concert, backstage dressing room, hotel room, or car. The camera operates like a roving eye. It zooms in and out, alternating between sweeping wide shots of vast spaces and intensely emotive close-ups. It glimpses fingers on guitars, feet on stage, screaming and swooning fans, the blinding blur of lights, business deals, and random meals, all in outbursts of first exposure sensation. There are no talking heads, no commentary, nothing but the camera and a microphone taking in the music, the environment, and the people and deliv-

ering that sensation to us.

Editing is critical to documentary filmmaking, so how Pennebaker spliced the footage together in the final cut comprises post-filming choices. In the final cut, we can't help but see his feelings lurking in the shadows, especially as he predicts what will come next. This is particularly evident in *Monterey Pop* where he distilled a 3-day concert into a 90-minute film. He assembles the material to create an experience, but he doesn't tell us what to think. What Pennebaker said about *Don't Look Back* could be applied to all three films: "I didn't want it to be a concert film ... It was new music that people had never heard much before. . . . I want people to think they are seeing behind the music."

Don't Look Back is as radical cinematically as Bob Dylan is musically. Dylan is political yet resistant, quiet yet insistent. Dylan combined music and poetry with outrage at social injustice to create groundbreaking music. Pennebaker's avant-garde cinematic mash-up perfectly captures the elusive Dylan.

The film represents a bridge in music and politics as it follows Dylan's last acoustic tour. Dylan was a visionary. Things needed to get louder to have impact. The film obsessively follows Dylan and his cadre of musicians, managers and fans as he talks himself and everyone around him in circles. The very fact that Dylan's rapid fire, muffled and fractured footage often seems unintelligible creates a radical rhythm that deconstructs ideological boxes.

The film surges with immediacy. Dylan jams with musicians, reads a newspaper, argues over a broken glass and political theories. He plays piano, types on a typewriter, plucks guitar strings, and mumbles brilliant absurdities. All these scenes capture glimmers of utopia on the edge of disintegration. The nonlinearity of the film and Dylan's music makes a political statement. As the camera roams, the movement in the film echoes the political movement in society and of Dylan's music.

When on stage, Dylan is a silhouette

surrounded by a white halo or in close-up reaching inside himself to pull out poetry mashed into music. He radiates a field of energy, refracted by light. In the final scene as he drives away from the concert hall, Dylan says, "I feel like I've been through some sort of thing" and so have we.

While *Don't Look Back* is filmed en-

from Haight Ashbury, the majority are fresh-faced newcomers to the scene who adopted "hippie culture" via LSD and fashion choices. The exodus past the vendor stalls at the end of the film reminds us that this form of resistance was easily packaged and sold.

Everything is feeling groovy with Simon & Garfunkle, and the people are

fronted a white band, dry-fucked an amplifier, and lit his guitar on fire. A Texan woman unleashed an eternity of female hurt. Where the hell were they going to go from here?

Pennebaker found where music was going when he filmed David Bowie's staged suicide of his fictional identity Ziggy Stardust. Pennebaker used his style to plunge us into Glam with Bowie prancing about singing the laments of being an alien in this unforgiving world. Embracing a manufactured identity seemed like the perfect road to authenticity during a time when commercialization tried to rip the heart out of rock. Pennebaker's organic filmmaking plays in beautiful contrast to Bowie's body displayed on stage like a confused doll. What a strange and different road this is from the scenes of Bob Dylan when we look back to that first film. Oddly, Dylan and Bowie are more joined through their rupturing of norms than complacently groovy artists like the Mamas & Papas and Simon and Garfunkle.

Activism comes with rupture. Pennebaker ruptured filmmaking to reflect the music of the time and the cracks in the world the music played against. He shot grainy 16mm film spliced together in montages of lights, body parts, instruments, and faces. He says of Monterey Pop: "It looks like a porno film but it's not." The world outside the music was pornographic, so using this aesthetic to capture the music was revolutionary. **CP**

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DA Pennebaker films Bob Dylan. From "Don't Look Back."

tirely in black and white, *Monterey Pop* bursts onto the screen with the color-saturated promise of the Summer of Love. Pieces of light are scrapped together in a psychedelic montage. It is an abstract bleed of color tinged with the residue of Purple Haze that lingered in the air.

Pennebaker documents the audience streaming quietly into the concert. A sea of white faces smiling from fields of open grass or tidy rows of white folding chairs. Flowers, ribbons, babies, dogs, dancing couples, macramé, bubbles, hippie buses, beads, feathers, and Flower Power pile up on the screen without reference to the Civil Rights Movement and Vietnam War demonstrations. Instead we see a lot of smiling people as white as the chairs they sit on and the marshmallows they roast. While in between there were plenty of gritty hippies coming down

in peaceful motion to the Mamas & Papas, but then Janis Joplin takes the stage, and we experience a paradigm shift in history and rock right before our very eyes. The cut to Mama Cass's face after Janis's performance says everything. She knows something has ruptured. No more strumming to sun-drenched abandon. Janis tears a hole through the illusion of peace with her tormented strains that pack the same power as Hendrix when he pulls "Wild Thing" out of his guitar and then lights it on fire. Pennebaker captures the faces of the audience in all their awe, disgust, and discomfort. So much for feeling groovy. It was time to just feel.

The film ends with Ravi Shankar playing Sitar, as Pennebaker cuts between Shankar, the perplexed and exhausted audience, and splinters of light. The Who had just smashed their guitars and drums. A black man

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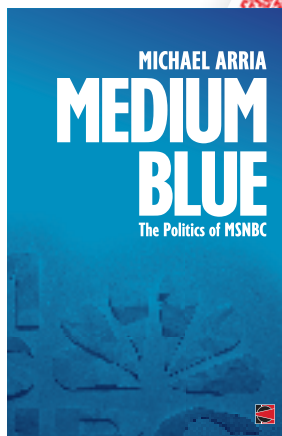
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Medium Blue, by Michael Arria: Barack Obama wasn't the only beneficiary of the calamitous Bush years. Something of an industry punchline since its formation in 1996, MSNBC suddenly gained a comprehensible voice during the era, while pinning its hopes upon the inspiring senator from Illinois. Obama's victory spelled success for the network, which saw a sizable ratings increase and began positioning itself as a viable alternative to the right-wing propaganda of Fox News.

Guillotined, by Alexander Cockburn: Cockburn sets out to save the English language from abuse by journalists, politicians, and bloggers. Here, he lines up a most wanted list of cliches, over-used phrases and tedious words and consigns them for execution. Ridiculing the use of hackneyed terms like "national conversation," "international community," and "sustainable development", this short, scorching pamphlet was Cockburn's final work.

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