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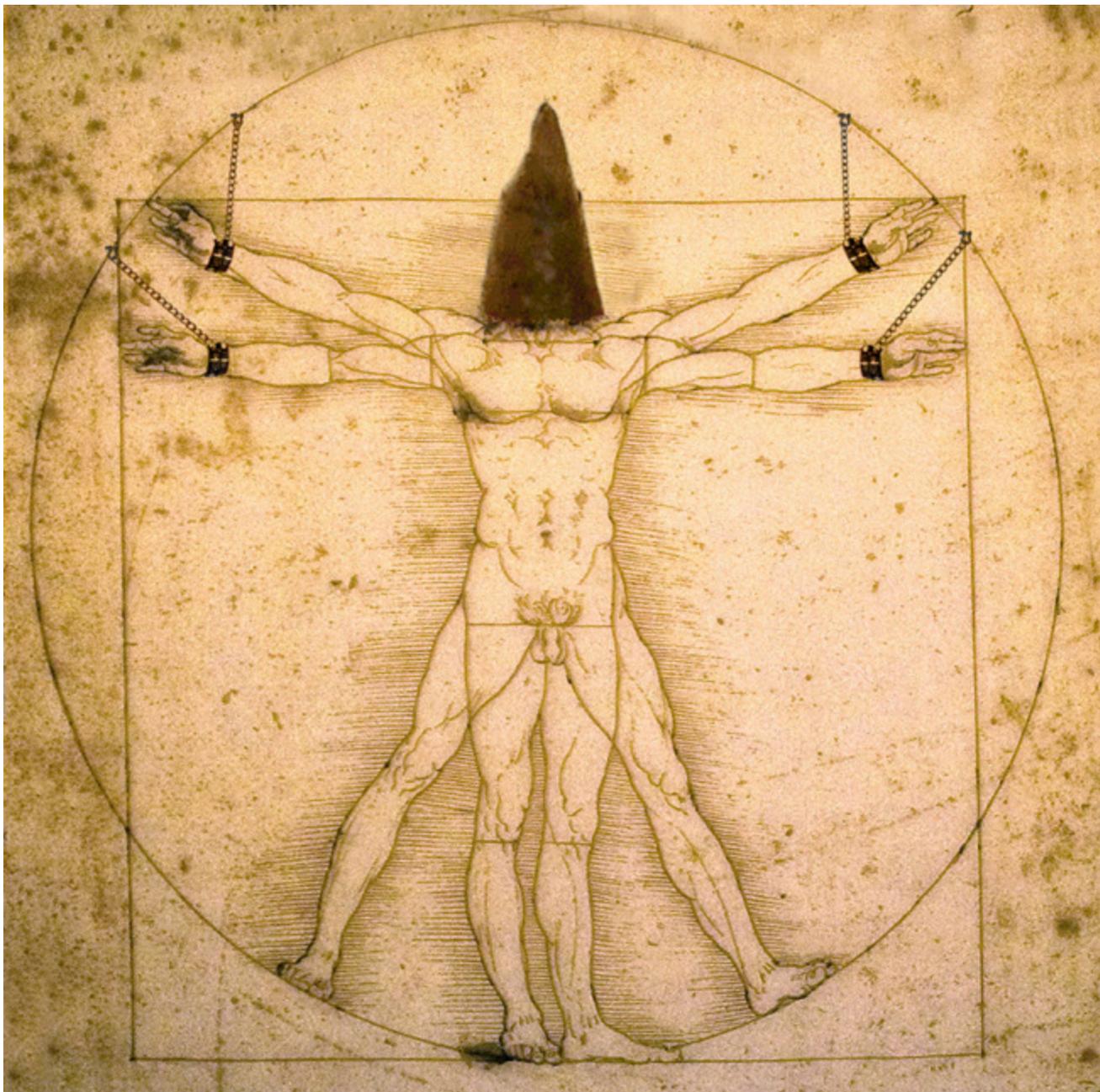
THE HUNDRED-YEAR TRAGEDY OF TORTURE BY CHRISTOPHER DIETRICH

PARADOX OF POLICE UNIONS BY DAVID MACARAY

SLAVE REBELLIONS ON THE OPEN SEAS BY LOUIS PROYECT

MUHAMMAD CHARLIE AND ME BY PAUL KRASSNER

ELVIS, RACE AND THE POOR SOUTH BY LEE BALLINGER



CounterPunch

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Cover Image:

Anatomy of Torture (After DaVinci)
by Nick Roney

In Memory of
Alexander Cockburn
1941–2012



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BY MIKE WHITNEY

Should Greece stay in the Eurozone?

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Obama's Delusion

Many young people of color were not at all eager to go to the voting booth to bolster the fortunes of Obama's Democratic party. It is remarkable the level of apathy in light of the fact that he is this nation's first president of color. I believe his legacy will be to cast a pallor over the American "democratic" process for many years to come. This is ironic since the demographics will be weighted more than ever on the ledger of Americans of color. The prognosis is ominous: an economy in decline facing an American public increasingly divided along racial and class lines frustrated by a political system less amenable to making any reforms possible. It takes little imagination as to what lies ahead. Fortunately, your writing helps to make the "writing on the wall" ever more apparent to the readers of CounterPunch and beyond.

Luis Gonzalez

Pithy and Succinct

St. Clair's Laughter in the Dark column was excellent, really top notch, first rate, pithy and succinct and true to your, and the dearly departed Mr Cockburn's, writing, i think the best of the lot, including even the good'uns from other people you had in CounterPunch on the same topic. Meanwhile, the Chinese leaders are as clueless as ever (even on the best of days the Chinese are constantly having an identity crisis), and they're mealy-mouthed as

usual because they don't know where they stand, sit, or fit in, in the world (to quote Fireside Theater, "how can you be in two places at once when you're really nowhere at all?"), something that the Americans think is inscrutable or deep, when it's nothing of the sort, just shallow and completely transparent. You should see the US-issue balaclavas on China's new "swat" teams, now where did they get that? Duh-h-h. Great article, thank you.

*Roger Bradshaw
Senior foreign editor,
China Daily*

Smolski With a Homer

Andrew Smolski's review of Dawn Paley's book — as well as his own take on The War On (Some) Drugs (as Krassner calls it) — is one of the finest pieces you've run in some time. And I say that as a regular CP reader/fan who finds most CP dailies to be top-shelf.

Michael Simmons

Don't Regulate Marijuana Like Alcohol

On February 20, US Representatives Jared Polis (D-CO) and Earl Blumenauer (D-OR) introduced two new bills for federal marijuana legalization. The US government's practice of imprisoning, fining, harassing and stigmatizing marijuana users is tragic and has damaged many lives. Ending prohibition is a welcome change, but these bills have severe problems. If passed, they would turn mari-

juana into a cartelized industry rather than a business opportunity for everyday people.

Blumenauer's bill, The Marijuana Tax Revenue Act of 2015 (HR 1014) would place a federal excise tax on marijuana, and occupational taxes on the marijuana-related businesses. Polis's HR 1013, The Regulate Marijuana Like Alcohol Act, would end federal prohibition of marijuana and transfer enforcement from the Drug Enforcement Agency to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. The bills would subject marijuana to the same sort of taxation and regulation as alcohol and tobacco, using Colorado as a nationwide model. Such a regime would lead to the development of "big marijuana" firms similar to "big alcohol" and "big tobacco."

Large conglomerates dominate the alcohol and tobacco markets, under the existing system of state-imposed excise taxes, licensing and mandatory three tier distribution. The extra costs of these requirements keep small producers out of these industries. The result is stifled competition and ripped off consumers. The same process will ultimately lead to "big marijuana" conglomerates with Anheuser-Bush-like market power and advertising budgets. Supporters of marijuana prohibition are not getting any younger. More than 213 million Americans live in jurisdictions with some form of legal marijuana use. Growing numbers recognize marijuana as a means of relaxation, a

catalyst for creativity and an exciting business opportunity. The only choice is whether to end prohibition in a way that keeps money in the hands of small producers and sellers, or one that concentrates it the hands of big business. The free market approach of decriminalization and nonintervention does the former. Polis and Blumenauer's "regulate and tax" approach does the latter. If American twenty-somethings want to earn money by selling pot to their friends, let them. If it helps them pay their bills and keep themselves off welfare we are all better off for it.

Government interventions tend to benefit big business and economic elites at the expense of ordinary people. Marijuana policy is no exception. The state's current prohibitionist policies benefit violent drug cartels, just as hyper-regulatory policies will benefit cartels of big corporations. This is just another area of life to get the state out of. In a free society consenting buyers and sellers can make their own decisions about marijuana. The state and big business can stay out of it.

*James C. Wilson
Center for a Stateless Society.*

Dignity

People are always talking about the dignity of work, usually in the context of the unemployed taking whatever kind of degrading low-wage job that comes their way. But I don't see any dignity when you have to keep your mouth shut, and head down for a wage that shouldn't buy either of those, let alone enough to pay someone to do actual work.

Mark Case



ROAMING CHARGES

Negative Culpability

BY JEFFREY ST. CLAIR

Here's what we learned from the release of the Senate's report on the CIA's use of torture: the Agency tortured some people, in the President's flippant phrase. More than a few people it turns out, though we probably will never know exactly how many. The techniques of torture were brutal, even sadistic. Though, again, the most barbarous measures have been redacted from public disclosure. The CIA learned almost nothing of value from these heinous crimes. More strikingly, the Agency didn't expect to pry out any fresh intelligence. Instead, what the torturers wanted most desperately was to extract false confessions, writhing accounts of ties between Saddam Hussein and Al Qaeda, linking Iraq to the 9/11 attacks, that could be used retroactively to justify a phony war. Thus did one crime feast on another.

But here's the rub. We still know very little about the government's torture program. And that's not just because ninety percent of the CIA report remains sequestered at Langley. Why? To protect sources and methods? Hardly. You can find those easily enough in any book on the Spanish Inquisition. The techniques haven't changed that much in five centuries. Just add a few jolts of electricity.

While the CIA wants to keep the details of its torture methods cloaked in mystery, the agency was very happy to let the fact that it was torturing prisoners of its covert operations slip out. Partly this was intended to send a message to the agency's enemies, that terrible torments were going to be inflicted on the bodies and minds of anyone would stand in its way: from Jihadis to Edward Snowden, if they could just lay their hands on him.

But, and now the psychology gets a

little tricky, the Agency also wanted the existence of its torture program to leak out to the American public, to whet the growing appetite for vengeance and, perhaps, to distract attention from the agency's record of massive blunders. And, by all accounts, the ploy worked. In the befouled moral consciousness of post-9/11, a stout majority of Americans, 59 percent in a recent poll, support the CIA's torture program. Many of those back the use of torture even though they know it is totally ineffective as a means of intelligence gathering. In other words, they crave blood, and virtually any Muslim's blood will do, regardless of culpability.

The declassified sections of the CIA report provide a grisly glimpse at the torture of 119 prisoners, many of them kidnapped. The agency now admits that at least 27 of those torture victims were absolutely innocent—though it is important to note that none of the others were proved to have committed crimes more serious than the ones committed against them. One of those guiltless men was tortured to death, that is: murdered by his American captors. In another case, the CIA nabbed the wrong guy off a busy street, then tortured him until his mind snapped. A bystander was killed in this botched operation.

Aside from a few editorial boards and human rights groups, no one seems too distraught by the ghastly revelations, veiled as they are. Perhaps this is a kind of twisted sign of imperial maturity, the country finally coming to terms with its own true character. Only the most gullible seem to cling to the naïve notion that torture is “un-American.” This is, after all, the nation that has happily funded the School of the Americas for decades, where graduate seminars are offered in the finer points of torture and

assassination for the butchers of Latin America.

Still it's possible to briefly mourn the loss of American innocence. In his 1987 film *Full-Metal Jacket*, Stanley Kubrick devoted the first half of his film to a harrowing depiction of basic training for Marine recruits at Parris Island. Here the young soldiers are forced to endure a sadistic regime of ridicule, humiliation and abuse, aimed at de-humanizing them, stripping them of basic notions of morality and their capacity for human empathy. This kind of official debasement is what it took to compel young Americans in the late 1960s to torch peasant huts, machine-gun farmers in rice paddies or drop napalm on women and children.

These days that dehumanization process takes place in the lecture halls of Yale, Georgetown and the University of Chicago, where the architects of torture and rendition learn the bureaucratic tools and legalisms of their trade. These are the same species of managerial elites who consult the novels of Charles Dickens in order to learn new ways to punish the poor. Austerity, of course, is a kind of system-wide torture by other means.

We now know no one will be held to account for these egregious acts. There will be no naming of names. No disciplinary actions. No terminations. No prosecutions. Indeed, one of the most notorious torturers, an officer who fetishized the waterboard, was promoted to lead the Agency's “global jihad unit.” This is what John Keats might have described as Negative Culpability, where the perpetrators of some of the most vile crimes in American history simply dissolve into the mist of the System.

The logic of impunity for the torturers doesn't just let government criminals off the hook; it sanctifies the crimes they committed and enshrines torture as a legitimate mechanism to enforce the American imperial enterprise. There can be no regrets when you aspire to dictate your terms to the rest of the world. **CP**



DIAMONDS AND RUST

Rambo-Lite

BY JOANN WYPIJEWSKI

It is hard to lament the fall of Brian Williams, suspended, as I write, from the news reader's chair at NBC for farcical puffery about trysts with near-death experience in Iraq. Williams never was impressive. He had the unctuous quality of a third-rate maitre de, full of himself yet keening to please. His mistake was thinking himself a serious journalist, and then imagining that derring-do was an essential criterion.

Still, the furor against Williams overmatched his sins—an illustration, once again, that in journalism as in politics the smaller the crime, the harsher the sentence.

The biggest crimes aren't even punished, and their perpetrators go on with their lucrative lives and reputations intact.

Years ago when I was at *The Nation* and Alexander Cockburn had a two-page column there, we had a little reporting team that did its best to destroy the reputations of the malignly powerful and their newsroom flacks. The latter weren't celebrity news readers, and their war stories had real costs in blood.

Shirley Christian was one of them. Youngsters will not have heard of her unless—heaven help them—they studied journalism with her at Columbia or the University of Kansas, but her eclipse, alas, owes nothing to our efforts. She is merely out to pasture in Kansas, in respectful retirement, still touting her Pulitzer Prize from 1981, when she symbolized big media's enlistment in Reagan's terror wars by proxy in Central America.

That history is worth remembering because it isn't so much the past as it is the present in embryo. What Reaganism accomplished was to reset the U.S. on a permanent war footing. Critical to

the project was a vast corps of reporters and editorialists who, with subtle innuendo or blatant lies, fostered an ideology consumed with national security and subversion, with communist threats that shape-shifted as necessary into terrorist threats in order to sow fear, swell the military and restore warmaking itself—in disgrace from Vietnam and the '60s antiwar energies—as a noble pursuit.

I mention Christian because, apart from being an apologist for the dirty war in Argentina and a propagandist for the fascist economic "miracle" in Chile (about which we did a demolishing column, researched by Alex's then-intern Ken Silverstein, who years later would found, yes!, *CounterPunch*), she played a key role in that ideological shift.

Politically reactionary herself, in 1982 she accused other reporters of being insufficiently critical of Red tendencies among Latin American insurgents, particularly the Sandinistas, then in power in Nicaragua. The new cold war was full on. As in the old cold war, the actual bloodletting and economic strangulation would take place in the Third World, and rightist accusations of commie-sympdom would lead to a chilling conformity at home. Out would go diligent reporters like Ray Bonner of *The New York Times*; in their place would come liberal trimmers or outright enablers of U.S.-backed terrorists. Christian would come to the *Times*; so would liberal James LeMoyné, whose advertising for the contras our little team also exposed. From Latin America to Africa to Afghanistan, Reagan would call ruffian specialists in massacring villages, dismembering trade unionists and disemboweling co-op farmers "freedom fighters," and the polite press

would do them the courtesy of ignoring their atrocities or reporting on them as conventional soldiery. *60 Minutes* would investigate the National and World Council of Churches as a commie front. Other media would insinuate the anti-nuke movement was a commie plot. All would give Israeli state terror cover. Hollywood would give us Rambo; Congress would fatten arms contractors; and woe to the skeptical reporter, who risked being called a bleeding heart, a moral weakling, a pansy. Editors shielded Reagan from the Iran/contra scandal, and when he died, in 2004, the liberal press, led by the smarmy Tim Russert, hailed him as just a really nice guy who made America proud again.

That corrupt pride begat the petty corruption of Brian Williams fancying himself a warrior. For he would not have been in that helicopter had it not been for the jacked militarism of the 1980s; or the Gulf War and shrugging barbarism of the 1990s ("It was worth it," said Madeleine Albright of the cost of sanctions on Iraq, 500,000 dead children); or the lies about WMDs that masqueraded as reporting by the *Times'* Judith Miller, making the case for war. Those lies wouldn't have made it to print if *Times* editors had cared about Miller's reporting; if they had not accommodated her fawning attraction to state security sources for years; if they themselves had not wanted to believe.

Miller is toast now; not so her colleagues and bosses. In his non-apology apology for the *Times*, Bill Keller, an early plumper for war on Iraq who got the top job a few months into it, wrote: "The rest of us were still a little drugged by testosterone. And maybe a little too pleased with ourselves for standing up to evil and defying the caricature of liberals as, to borrow a phrase from those days, brie-eating surrender monkeys."

The ugly phrasing with its hint of panic is straight out of Reagan's America. And Keller is doing fine. **CP**



EMPIRE BURLESQUE

Master's Degree

BY CHRIS FLOYD

In a recent *London Review of Books* article detailing the abysmal horrors of Egypt's prison system—a multi-circled hell with visible and invisible layers, all of them wretched, some of them unspeakably so—Tom Stevenson noted, in passing, this piece of historical context:

“The prison system in Egypt is the legacy of a long period of British control, followed by the successive autocracies of Nasser, Sadat and Mubarak. It was in a British prison during the Second World War that some of the torture techniques now employed by Egyptian intelligence were refined. The Combined Services Detailed Interrogation Centre was annexed to a British army camp in the Cairo suburb of Maadi. The camp had a cinema, boxing ring and ice-cream parlour for the soldiers, but a few hundred metres away British interrogators were experimenting on as many as sixty prisoners at a time, attempting to induce hallucinations with thyroxine, or trying to break them psychologically by forcing them to dig their own graves.”

This is an important fact to remember. Far be it from me to deny agency to the creative peoples of the Middle East, who like all other human groupings are entirely capable of devising their own methods and traditions of tormenting each other. But this tidbit of recent history reminds us of the true nature of the “Western values” said to be under attack by the “savages” of Islamic extremism. (Always excepting the Islamic extremists that our Western Valuists arm and support, of course, such as the Saudi royals or the Libyan extremists ushered to power by the humanitarian application of NATO bombs.) It also reminds us that today's incessant Western “interventions” in the region

are not some new direction forced on civilization's defenders by the sudden and unfathomable rise of Islamic extremism, but a continuation of old polices, all based on the unexamined assumption of Western superiority—and the entirely transparent lust for power and loot on the part of Western elites.

For just as Hitler and the Nazis looked to America's enthusiastic eugenics programs (some of which continued until the 1970s) for inspiration and “scientific” confirmation of their own racist policies, so too much of the “savagery” now rampant in the “Arc of Crisis” was learned at the feet—and the fists—of the Western powers who spread their enlightenment over the region for so many decades. Indeed, who can forget the bitter joke told by Iraqis during America's invasion in 2003 to overthrow its former client, Saddam: “The pupil has gone; now the master has come.” And of course the American headmaster taught his new pupils in Baghdad many valuable lessons during his stay in Iraq: how to sow sectarian hatred to augment your power, for example, how to sell off your national patrimony to the highest bidder, how to line your pockets with public loot while beggaring your people and leaving them exposed to violence, chaos and extremism.

There is little in Stevenson's harrowing description of Egypt's prisons, and the brutality meted out there, that could not be found in America's 21st century Terror War gulag. Of course, the Egyptians have had decades of authoritarianism to work out their own approaches to punishment and persuasion—but they have been aided, supplied, trained and tutored by American military and security experts every step

of the way. That iron-hand-in-fisted-glove cooperation continues under the Peace Prize Prez today, of course -- despite the murderous repression of the Sisi regime, which, as Stevenson rightly notes, outstrips even the atrocities of Hillary Clinton's long-cherished family friend, Hosni Mubarak.

The greatest service America has performed for the torturers of the world is not the training, teaching, S&M gear and money it has given them; it's *legitimization*. America has brought torture over from “the dark side,” as Dick Cheney called it, from the shadow world where, although long practiced, it remained tinged with shame and criminality. Instead, Bush and Obama—especially Obama—has taken torture boldly into the shining light of day, as a legitimate, official necessity of statecraft: no longer a crime subject to prosecution, no longer shameful or secret but a matter of public debate on how best to implement it “in a way in keeping with our values.”

For of course, American torture still goes on: from the force-feeding of strapped-down captives in Gitmo to the psychological and physical terror Obama inflicts on thousands of innocent people every day as they watch the lizard-eyed drones hovering over them and wonder if this is the hour they'll be ripped to shreds or burned alive to whatever the hell goes on in the secret cells our humanitarian leaders still keep in bases, basements and hidey holes all over the world.

Every day, the Keepers of our Sacred Values teach the world that death and torture, lies and torment, loot and terror are legitimate means—the *only* legitimate means—for taking and holding power. They teach it from the podiums where they mouth their obscene pieties. They teach it in their nation-raping, terror-spawning interventions. And they teach it, every day, on the bodies of their victims. **CP**



GRASPING AT STRAWS

Two Bad Choices for Greece

BY MIKE WHITNEY

Everyone agrees that Greece is broke. What they disagree about is whether the nation should organize its economy to repay its creditors or try to relieve the depression-like conditions that have persisted for the last five years.

The troika (The European Central Bank, the European Commission and the International Monetary Fund) thinks that Greece should honor its commitments first, that a deal is a deal. They think Greece should accept the punitive terms of its \$277 billion bailout even though those terms have greatly undermined the country's ability to dig its way out of debt or to return to a sustainable growth path.

The new Syriza-led government thinks this approach is harsh and counterproductive. They point to the fact that Greece's current debt-to-GDP has ballooned from 115 percent in 2009 more than 170 percent today. This, they say, is proof that things that things have gone from bad to worse. Why continue with the same policy if it merely prolongs the slump and deepens the crisis?

It's all a question of loyalties. The troika represents the interests of the lenders—mainly banks, bondholders and taxpayers from other European countries—so naturally they come down on the side of the creditors. Syriza, on the other hand, wants to return Greece to economic health, which is impossible unless it's allowed to restructure its debt and end the austerity programs that strangle growth. Syriza doesn't want a free lunch. They merely want remedies that achieve their primary objectives while costing creditors as little as possible. What Greece's Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis opposes more than anything, is continuing the extend and pretend policy

that has dramatically increased Greece's debt burden. He compares this to using a credit card to pay the mortgage. It might postpone the inevitable day of default, but it's not a real solution.

Syriza has made little progress in persuading members of the Eurogroup that prior agreements need to be changed. Nearly every part of Syriza's program has been rejected. Leaders in Brussels, Berlin and Frankfurt will not allow Greece to reduce the value of its loans, cut its budget surplus from 4.5 percent to 1 percent (which would loosen up money for domestic spending.), stop the privatization of public assets, or roll back austerity reforms which have increased unemployment, slashed pensions and health care, and put a damper on growth. Not only have Syriza's recommendations been shrugged off, but the European Central Bank (ECB) recently announced that it would no longer accept Greek government bonds as collateral under its emergency liquidity program. By threatening to cut off liquidity, the ECB is sending a message to Syriza that they are prepared to incite a panic and collapse the Greek banking system if the government doesn't follow their diktats. This isn't economics, it's blackmail.

It's worth noting that Greece is only partially responsible for its current problems. Not all of Greece's debt can be attributed to corruption or profligate spending during the pre-crisis years. A great deal of it is connected to structural and institutional problems in the Eurozone itself, that is, the bulging current-account imbalances are the direct result of introducing a single currency among 19 member states without the financial or political mechanisms in place that would allow the system

to work properly. If the founders of the currency bloc had listened to their critics at the time, they would have understood that removing the exchange rate risk was going to lead to huge imbalances that would eventually trigger a crisis. And that's what happened. As capital flowed to the weaker and less competitive countries in the south; interest rates fell, lending surged, and the red ink exploded. When it became apparent that Greece would be unable to meet its obligations in 2009, capital flows reversed, bond yields spiked, and the country slipped into crisis.

Not surprisingly, Ireland, Portugal, Spain, and Italy have all been walloped by the same sovereign debt hurricane as Greece. The reason for this is that Eurozone is a rules-based monetary union that lacks a central treasury, a bond market, or a mutually agreed-upon policy for fiscal transfers to the weaker countries. Absent greater political integration, the Eurozone is doomed to lurch from one crisis to the next until the union finally breaks apart.

Varoufakis's plan would provide some small relief from austerity, but they're certainly not a panacea. Greece's slump will drag on regardless of reforms because the government doesn't control the currency it uses, so it cannot provide fiscal stimulus to increase activity or weaken the currency in order to boost competitiveness. All Varoufakis's demands would do, if they were implemented, is soften some of the effects of the EZ's belt-tightening regimen. They'd do very little to stimulate growth or return the economy to full employment.

Even so, it looks like the Eurogroup is going to reject Varoufakis's "modest" proposals outright. That leaves Greece with the unpleasant task of deciding whether to stay in the Eurozone in a permanent state of depression or making a clean break and returning to the drachma. Either way, it's going to be hard times for the Greek people for years to come. **CP**

The Stain of American Imperialism

The Hundred-Year Tragedy of Torture

BY CHRISTOPHER DIETRICH

John McCain, the Republican Senator from Arizona who spent time in a North Vietnamese prison camp in the early 1970s, has been an outspoken critic of recent CIA torture. Torture, he said in anticipation of last month's revelations by the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, undermines core American values and beliefs. The CIA had "stained our national honor." McCain is right that torture is a disgrace, but he is wrong when he describes it as a historical blemish.

The tragedy of the ramshackle CIA torture policies since 2001 is not only that the CIA tortured people. The tragedy

Filipino nationalists to extract intelligence information. That torture, which one soldier described as bloating up the victim like a frog, was so common as a public spectacle that it was even enshrined in patriotic songs and portraits. These atrocities reached the American public through letters from soldiers that were published in American newspapers and led to Senate investigations in 1902. The resultant court-martial proceedings, however, emphasized the "water cure" as an deviation from an otherwise beneficial and enlightening American occupation.

News of torture also made its way back to the United States from Haiti, which the United States occupied from 1915 to 1934. The Reverend L. Tom Evans reported seeing Marine gendarmes holding the heads of female prisoners under spigots. Evans also described in 1918 how the U.S. occupiers of Haiti whipped the back of another prisoner "into a kind of jelly." As the historian Mary Renda suggests in *Taking Haiti*, the violence of military occupation made torture, rape,

“The Rev. L. Tom Evans reported seeing Marine gendarmes holding the heads of female prisoners under spigots. Evans also described in 1918 how the US occupiers of Haiti whipped the back of another prisoner ‘into a kind of jelly.’”

of CIA torture is not only that it produced little useful intelligence. The tragedy of CIA torture is not only that officials lied to Congress and to the public. The tragedy of CIA torture is that torture is part of a longer history of the assumptions, beliefs, and habits of American power.

Examples from the early twentieth century to the 1980s all point to the conclusion that torture, although a single-track diplomacy of arbitrary violence and personal violation, has always been connected to larger designs of expansion couched in the values-laden language of freedom and liberation. In other words, torture is a red thread running through the historical expansion of American military and commercial ambitions. Today's commentators are correct that we should not acquiesce to the vicious and undemocratic inertia of the past. But to move beyond the past we must understand that torture and violence has failed in its correlation with the avowed ideals of American power for over a century.

At the dawn of the twentieth century, the United States expanded its economic and territorial boundaries as never before. As the locus of American commercial interest moved beyond the continental frontier, torture accompanied military and economic dominance. The historian Paul Kramer has described in *Blood of Government* how U.S. interrogators used the "water cure" in the Philippines. American soldiers poured buckets of waste-water into the mouths of

branding, and other forms of cruelty a routine that affected everybody, from marines to prisoners to peasant resisters. Like Kramer, Renda also notes that torture was wrapped up in broader issues of racial prejudice and economic control. The field secretary of the NAACP, James Weldon Johnson, wrote after his visit that many of the U.S. marines were "violently steeped in prejudice."

Cases of U.S.-sanctioned torture during the Cold War are more recent and better-known. Military regimes in South Asia and Latin America, in particular, engaged American support in their policies of arbitrary arrest, imprisonment, summary executions, forced disappearances and torture as part of their counterinsurgency campaigns. CIA "torture manuals" that were distributed to a number of American allies described in detail coercive measures designed to destroy the will of prisoners.

One manual, the famous 1963 *KUBARAK* interrogation pamphlet, was initially designed for use against a small number of Soviet counterintelligence targets. But by the end of that decade, as historian Al McCoy writes in *Torture and Impunity*, the manual and its practices were disseminated to about 50 U.S. allies through the Office of Public Safety, a division of the U.S. Agency for International Development that grew into a global anti-communist operation with more than four hundred U.S. police advisers worldwide. CIA interroga-

tion and interrogation training became part of this larger, and reached its culmination in South Vietnam with the Phoenix program. The project began, according to McCoy, when CIA chief of station Peer DeSilva was shocked by the Viet Cong's application of "torture and murder to achieve the political and psychological impact they wanted."

Under his leadership, and with the support of the Office of Public Safety, the CIA began to develop "more sophisticated techniques" to replace the "old French methods" of physical torture practiced by the Saigon police and the new Vietnamese Central Intelligence Organization. The new paradigm was designed, in some ways, to give the exercise of brutality a veneer of scientific authority. But practice was actually

the historian Greg Grandin writes in *Empire's Workshop*, advisers from the State and Defense Departments and the CIA schooled South American officials in interrogation techniques and provided intelligence-gathering technology and equipment that fortified internal police efforts. The Office of Public Safety shipped polygraph and electroshock machines in diplomatic pouches across Latin America through the CIA field offices in Panama and Buenos Aires. As American agents in Latin America condoned or practiced torture, fear of it became so prevalent that it became a way of life for the dissenting opposition. In Spanish, waterboarding was even renamed *el submarino*.

American support for torture—part of a larger system of



CIA detainee at Bagram Prison. Photo: Al Jazeera.

a mix of the old—electrical shock, beatings, and rape—with the new program of psychological coercion developed in the previous two decades. In a tour of South Vietnamese detention centers in 1969, the CIA regional chief about the "horrible mess" he encountered. Of particular concern to him was "the water treatment, where they forced water down prisoners' throats until their stomachs swelled up, or the torture in which they applied electric shock to the genitals and nipples."

The systematic use of torture, physical and psychological, to limit opposition also became common in Brazil, Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay in the 1970s and 1980s. American military training for foreign soldiers and police units was conducted then under an explicit assumption that trainees would adhere to higher standards of democracy and respect for individual rights. But, as human rights groups have argued consistently, the flouting of civilian rule and the widespread practices of repression pointed out the inconsistency of that rhetoric. As

economic inequality, political disenfranchisement, and ideological intolerance—repeated itself in South Asia. The history Bradley Simpson has noted in *Economists with Guns* that the Johnson administration extended covert assistance to Indonesian forces in their 1965 and 1966 pogrom of communists. The U.S. embassy, mirroring CIA actions in Iraq and Guatemala, turned over lists of communists that the Indonesian regime used to track down, arrest, torture, and execute members of the Indonesian communist party and trade unions. In addition to police training, the United States also provided the government with communications equipment and, covertly through neighboring Thailand, arms and money.

Despite occurring in different times and places, these historical cases of American and American-sanctioned torture have a number of similarities that are echoed today. The details are gruesome. Race and racism are elements to con-

sider; in each case justifications of torture as a legitimate form of interrogation found fertile ground in arguments about the intrinsic violence of a native society. The revelations of torture also roused outrage at home. But at the same time they prompted attempts to legitimize torture. Those fierce domestic debates have been accompanied by the restriction of political discussion abroad. As a horrifying display of overweening power, torture has consistently weakened both radical and moderate dissent in foreign societies. It and other forms of repression have thus pushed political debate further to the left or the right and thus established momentum for greater violence.

Most importantly, though, history teaches us that torture has been inextricably interwoven with the expansion of American power. In each case, as in our present one, torture is part of a greater climate of military and economic enlargement. It is coded in the institutional DNA of twentieth century expansionist policies. Torture is not some epiphenomenon that exists outside of normal life. Rather, historical experience points to the opposite conclusion: it is a logical extension of American diplomacy. Recent discussions of torture have failed in their separation of the ideals attributed to American power and the actual practices of military or economic expansion.

Torture is, according to the common argument, out of contact with reality. But in fact torture is in close contact with the reality of American expansion. That long-running disparity between the actuality of violence and the rhetoric of humanitarianism, exacerbated by the glaring disparity between violent means and allegedly moral ends, is the real tragedy of torture.

There are moral and political implications to this long history of American and American-supported torture. If we define torture as an anomaly, it relieves us of having the responsibility of dealing with it as part of a larger problem. Our national leaders will struggle to reconcile our pledges of humanitarianism to the practice of power as they grope their way toward a new understanding. They should remember that the commitment to humanitarianism, democracy, and individual rights cannot work if it is conditional, so easily forsaken when an administration or a shadowy cadre within an administration decides upon a national security imperative.

The rebuke of the Senate Intelligence Committee will only be meaningful if it leads to a sustained and transparent dialogue. If the Obama administration and other national leaders make these steps a priority, the torture report may be remembered as an important step in the development of a more moral U.S. foreign policy. If not, the self-critical yet self-congratulatory narrative of torture as exception will continue, tragically. **CP**

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Unionism vs. Cop-ism The Paradox of Police Unions

BY DAVID MACARAY

The history of the American labor movement is rich—diverse, exhilarating, depressing, inspirational and heart-breaking. Ever since passage of the landmark National Labor Relations Act (the Wagner Act), in 1935, unions have been recognized as the legal, government-sanctioned entities dedicated to improving the wages, benefits and working conditions of employees.

Clearly, unions matter. During the affluent 1950s, when this country's vaunted middle-class was busy carving out its niche, union membership proudly stood at close to 35-percent. Today, with the middle-class under siege and continuing to be eroded, it hovers at barely 11-percent.

The invention of unions was predicated upon one simple principle: The time-honored belief that without some form of unified resistance—without the “strength in numbers” leverage that only collectivism can provide—workers would remain at the mercy of management's self-serving definitions of “fair wages” and “adequate working conditions.” Simple as that.

When Douglas MacArthur was placed in charge of “re-constructing” Japan after World War II, he insisted that the Japanese establish labor unions (which they never had), fearing that, without them, management would become too powerful. It's worth mentioning that General MacArthur was no “We shall overcome” liberal. He was a rightwing Republican.

Although most people tend to associate organized labor with traditional blue collar jobs and tradecrafts, when they take a closer look, they discover that America's membership rolls (meager as they are) include men and women from all walks of life, in both the private and public sector.

In addition to the obvious—autoworkers, steel workers, truck drivers, electricians, machinists, et al—you will find pilots, flight attendants (many of them represented by the Teamsters), teachers, professors, engineers, architects, graduate students, nurses, computer programmers, and symphony orchestra musicians.

And among the sizeable number of union members employed in the public sector, the most visible and, lately, the most controversial (even more controversial than those beleaguered public school teachers, who were unfairly in the crosshairs for years) have been municipal police officers.

Though it seems odd—if not freakishly counter-intuitive—to think of these gun-toting neo-fascists as rank-and-file proles, police collectives are found all over the Western world. In the United States, arguably the most “capitalistic” nation on

earth, the roots of police unionism can be traced all the way back to the nineteenth century. That whirring sound you hear in the background is Karl Marx spinning in his grave.

Some of today's police collectives include: The Australian Federal Police Association, Scottish Police Federation, Association of Scottish Police Superintendents, Swedish Police Union, Police Federation of Northern Ireland, Norwegian Police Federation, Police Federation of England and Wales, Defense Police Federation (UK), National Black Police Association (US), and the National Association of Muslim Police (established in England, in 2007). There are a dozen more of these, including three in Canada.

The first important "quasi-union" established by a U.S. police department was the Patrolmen's Benevolent Association of the City of New York (PBA). Founded as a fraternal organization in 1892, the PBA is today the largest labor union representing New York City police officers. The second largest, and one you don't hear much about, is the Detectives Endowment Association of the City of New York.

From the outset, the PBA has been able to exert enormous leverage. Although the Association eschewed use of the term "union," evidence of its influence can be seen in the fact that, as far back as 1901, it was able to negotiate an 8-hour workday, which, given the working conditions of the early twentieth century, was no small feat. In 1903, Mary "Mother" Jones led the drive to limit child laborers to only 55 hours a week. And these were children.

One can imagine the envy and resentment this 8-hour workday incited in the Boston police force, 220 miles up the road. Indeed, it must have tormented these Beantown patrolmen to no end. The Boston police department—which, almost two decades later, was still required to work 10 and 12-hour days and 75-90 hour weeks, and despite already being low-balled on wages and benefits—was still forced to pay for its own uniforms and gear. In order to hit people, they had to buy their own clubs.

In the eyes of Boston cops, while their New York brethren were being given the royal treatment, they themselves were being treated like freeloading relatives. Inevitably, their simmering discontent erupted into an historic strike that not only attracted national attention, but had a deleterious and lasting effect on the American labor movement.

The Boston Police Strike commenced on September 9, 1919. Significantly, this was just two years after the 1917 Russian Revolution, a cataclysmic event that changed the face of Europe and scared the bejeezus out of any number of monarchs and industrial moguls. As a consequence, this municipal labor dispute was instantly thrust into a larger context—an international political context—and was depicted in the American media as being Bolshevik-led.

While it's likely that, today, any group of disgruntled cops—no matter what their issues—would be regarded as greedy, ungrateful bastards, that wasn't the case in 1919. Greed

played very little part in it. According to R.K. Murray's *Red Scare: A Study in National Hysteria*, these striking police officers were shrilly portrayed as Communists, "deserters" and "agents of Lenin." Given this emotionally charged atmosphere, the Boston police couldn't have picked a worse time to stage a walkout.

Also, considering how far to the political right we have tilted in the last half-century, it's hard to imagine there was a moment in history when U.S. citizens actually feared a peasant uprising—a Communist-led proletarian revolution. Not only hard to imagine, but with so many people convinced that the tame-as-a-putt-duck Barack Obama (who likely would have been labeled a Rockefeller Republican in the mid-1970s) is a "socialist," the very notion seems preposterous.

Unlike strikes whose provenance gets lost in rhetoric and saber-rattling, the cause of the 1919 strike was never in doubt; it was crystal clear to both sides from the very beginning. This was all about union ideology. Boston Police Commissioner Edwin Curtis had refused to allow his patrolmen—who had already formed their own fledgling union—to join the influential AFL (American Federation of Labor), led by the formidable Samuel Gompers, ex-president of the cigar makers union.

There were already 36 municipal police departments affiliated with the AFL, so the notion of these guys joining up wasn't exactly an outlandish idea. But Commissioner Curtis was vehement in his opposition, having publicly vowed to do everything in his power to stop them. As for Gompers, as much as he approved of strikes, and as much as he would have welcomed another police department to the Federation, he already sensed trouble—not only in Boston, but in the country.

Aware that public fury was being fanned by the media's anti-Communist hysteria, and fearing the damage that a prolonged strike could have on the labor movement, the president of the mighty AFL abruptly shifted gears. Gompers urged the men to call it off—call off the strike and return to work immediately.

Alas, it was too late. The governor of Massachusetts, 47-year old Calvin Coolidge, with one eye on public safety and the other eye on opinion polls, had already issued a categorical rebuke ("There is no right to strike against the public peace by anybody, anywhere, any time.") reaffirming his support of Curtis's hardline position and maintaining that these misguided patrolmen had irrevocably crossed a line.

And that was the ballgame. By choosing to withhold their labor, the police had ruined any chance of their returning to work. The city of Boston now viewed them not as "protesters," but as traitors and cowards, and refused to rehire them. Instead, the city looked to State Guardsmen and volunteers to fill the vacancies, and with all the unemployed WWI veterans available, they had no problem finding takers.

Although the United Garment Workers demonstrated their

union solidarity by refusing to sew uniforms for the new hires (forcing them to bear the indignity of showing up for work in civilian clothes), Boston's civic leaders poured salt in the wounds by giving the replacement workers better salaries and more vacation time than the strikers had. The replacements not only received a starting salary of \$1400, but they got their own pension plan.

There were 1,544 police officers on the Boston force at the time of the strike, and 1117 had joined the walkout. Not only did these men lose their jobs (pitifully, they later formed the Association of Former Police of the City of Boston), but the labor movement itself was dealt a crushing public relations blow. Unions were now viewed as "dangerous" and "un-American." Following in the wake of the Russian Revolution, 1919 turned out to be a disastrous year for organized labor.

But "dangerous" or not, according to Philip S. Foner's *History of the Labor Movement in the United States*, these police had an abundance of legitimate grievances, beginning with their paychecks. In the six years prior to the strike, inflation had been spiraling upwards. Yet, even with the cost of living having risen a whopping 76-percent, Boston police wages during that same period had increased by only 18-percent.

Moreover, besides resenting having to cough up that \$250 for their own uniforms and equipment (Boston police earned only \$1100 annually), when these guys began comparing their base wages to those of other workers, they became further demoralized, and enraged.

Not only were they making less than half as much as skilled craftsmen (cabinet makers, millwrights, electricians, etc.), they were making 50 cents a day less than streetcar conductors, and a third less than municipal laborers, which is to say that even city street-sweepers were making more money than Boston's finest. Clearly, a strike made eminent sense. Only in hindsight was it seen to be a monumental mistake.

A couple of notable things occurred in its aftermath. Predictably, Calvin Coolidge's career took off like a rocket. In the eyes of the public, beating down these subversive policemen—preventing the Bolsheviks from gaining a foothold—made him a national hero. In 1920, Coolidge won the Republican vice-presidential nomination, and after Harding died in office (in 1923), became the thirtieth president, an ascendancy largely traceable to the police strike.

Also, in a desperate attempt at damage control, Gompers stunned everyone by immediately revoking the charter of every police force in the country affiliated with his Federation. Almost overnight, the number of police departments belonging to the AFL dropped from 36 to zero. The strike was toxic. There would be no serious attempts to organize police officers for almost two decades, not until WWII.

A state public sector union's right to collective bargaining is controlled at the state level (federal employees fall under federal law), with the state legislature having the authority to

say yea or nay. Ironically, Wisconsin, the first state to grant its public sector employees the right to collective bargaining (in 1959), rescinded that same right, in 2011, led by a reactionary Republican governor (the Alfred E. Neumanesque, Scott Walker) and his state assembly minions.

Still, beginning in the early 1960s, many states passed laws, or limited versions of them, permitting public employees to engage in collective bargaining. Understandably, for reasons of safety and public welfare, the police and fire departments are prohibited from going on strike. New York, with its "Taylor Law," goes even further, making it illegal for any public employees to engage in work stoppages.

Of course, for the police, being told that work stoppages were illegal wasn't going to end the conversation, not when there were grievances left to settle. Laws prohibiting them from striking were what led to the "blue flu," where policemen fail to show up for work, claiming to be sick. When it comes to believing that they, and they alone, know what needs to be done, the police can be incredibly arrogant, clinging to the view that, for the "American way of life" to flourish, police interests must supersede public interests.

But as nutty as that view is, it has little to do with labor unions. In fact, people who believe that the main problem with America's police unions is that these cops simply possess too much old-fashioned "union solidarity" are badly misinterpreting the facts. Cops may be lots of things—but solid rank-and-file union brothers ain't one of them.

As to why police unions are perceived so negatively, there are several reasons. For one, unions in general—all unions, not just the police—are not nearly as respected or valued as they once were. That's partly the result of a change in American socio-economics, and partly the result of a well-coordinated smear campaign conducted by free market fundamentalists who've been dining out on labor's vulnerabilities for 30 years.

For another, people don't see the police as the same dedicated union members that, say, longshoremen, steelworkers and autoworkers are. The police don't fit the mold. Besides the obvious differences in the jobs they perform, cops are notoriously uncooperative when it comes to supporting other unions.

For another, people may still recall that off-duty policemen were routinely hired by management as "goon squads," paid to break up picket lines and bust the heads of union organizers. And for people with well-honed labor sensibilities and good memories, the chasm between yesterday's goon squads and today's "union brothers" is simply too wide to bridge.

And then there's that mother of all contradictions. Even though it's we taxpayers who pay their salaries and benefits, the police treat us with contempt, if not downright hostility. You see it in their willingness to regiment and bully us, and you see it in their nasty habit of shooting first and asking questions later (particularly when the target is an African-

American male).

Largely traceable to the rise of the civil rights and anti-war movements of the 1960s, when orchestrated protests and demonstrations began spilling into America's streets, big-city police departments have been increasingly perceived as racist, reactionary, and having assumed the hated role of an "occupational force" in low-income, non-white neighborhoods.

But as accurate as that perception may be, it raises a question: How would these same cops behave if they didn't belong to a union? Would that change anything? Do we honestly believe that if these guys weren't union members, they would be less racist, less arrogant, less violent, less obnoxious, more compassionate, and more enlightened?

One clue to answering that is provided by newsreel footage from the 1950s and 1960s—footage showing policemen in the Deep South beating and kicking peaceful civil rights demonstrators, turning their attack dogs on passive, non-resisting African-Americans, and spraying male and female protesters with high-pressure water hoses.

None of those cops—not a single one—were union members. However, some of them were, in fact, members of another "collective": the Ku Klux Klan. If you think organized labor is ideologically impacted, try the Klan. Although people tend to think of the KKK as being exclusively anti-black, it's worth noting that, in addition to African-Americans, Jews, Catholics and anarchists, the post-Reconstruction version of the Klan (the "Second Klan") also denounced unions.

Which is not to say unions are without fault. Far from it. Labor cannot deny that it has a spotty record when it comes to social issues such as race, sexism, the environment, and immigration. Not to make excuses, but that spotty record can be attributed to a profoundly one-dimensional view of the world. Rightly or wrongly, given how bloody those early "wage and hour" battles were, labor's focus has pretty much been confined to economics.

A glaring example of that is the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act. This law banned Chinese immigration to the U.S. for fear Chinese workers would lower the standard of living and destroy whatever leverage the unions had, and was heartily endorsed by the Knights of Labor, which was then considered

a fairly progressive organization. The only union to oppose the Exclusion Act was the IWW (Industrial Workers of the World), in 1905.

Another troubling aspect of municipal police departments, unrelated to unionism, is their growing militarization. It seems that every police force in the country now wants to be regarded as a technological super-power, with its own exotic equipment (helmet-mounted radar, anyone?) and menacing SWAT team. Basically, it derives from watching too much television.

If we were to list the declension, it might go something like this: Parking lot attendants fantasize about being security guards; security guards fantasize about being cops; cops

fantasize about being FBI agents; FBI agents fantasize about being CIA operatives; and CIA operatives fantasize about being Jason Stratham.

As for the internal workings of municipal police unions, they resemble those of any other big-time union, which is



Police scabs during Boston police strike of 1918. Photo: Mass. Historical Society..

to say police unions are going to represent all dues-paying members, no matter what the charge. Patrick Lynch, current president of the PBA, is going to represent any policeman under his jurisdiction who's been accused of committing a violation, which is exactly what he's supposed to do. In fact, if he isn't willing to do that, he should resign.

One difficulty people have with decoding unions is failing to appreciate the distinction between "representing" and "defending" a union member. That's a critical distinction. While an employee caught stealing is entitled to being "represented" by his union (i.e., to hear his side, make sure the facts are accurate, see that the punishment suits the crime, etc.), he isn't entitled to being "defended." How does one "defend" a thief?

Similarly, people fail to recognize the distinction between "snitching" and "whistle-blowing." Obviously, because not all jobs and professions are equal in responsibility and gravitas, the stakes involved in each (the potential damage, the ramifications, the public trust) are going to vary greatly.

Consider: Wouldn't every one of us hope that a priest would report a fellow priest who was known to be sexually molesting children? And wouldn't we all hope a school teacher would report a fellow teacher for committing the same crime—or that a conscientious police officer would

report a fellow officer's deliberate falsification of a brutality or shooting report?

This is where policemen not only fail the litmus test, but deliberately bend the meaning and purpose of labor unions to suit their own needs. In no way does being a "good union brother" require a cop to protect a fellow cop who shoots an unarmed man—shoots him, denies it, lies about it, and then demands that his colleagues lie to protect him.

One would hope that, with the stakes being this high (Doesn't the Social Contract itself come into play here?), if the police had any professional pride, they would insist on reporting this shooter, lest his actions reflect negatively on the whole department. And not to state the obvious, but in many cases what these "D&D" (deaf and dumb) officers are concealing isn't just "bad form," it's a criminal offense.

Now consider factory work, where the stakes are infinitely lower. The forklift driver who goes to the boss and reports a fellow employee's laziness or shoddy work isn't engaging in whistle-blowing. He's tattling. If it occurred in a non-union shop, the person doing it would be seen merely as an asshole, but if it occurred in a union shop, he would be seen as both an asshole and a snitch, which raises the sperm count considerably.

When I was president of an industrial union, I had a clear understanding of the membership's opinion of snitching to management. In a word, they abhorred it. The following is a true account of something that happened in the mid-1990s.

The company's HR rep approached me and said they'd found evidence of theft in the warehouse. Someone had been breaking into cases of product and stealing coupons. Using the argument that we (union and management) were "on the same team," she asked that we "put out our feelers," learn who the culprit was, and then identify him so he could be properly punished. I was stunned. I not only flatly refused, I was mildly insulted at even being asked.

Besides it not being our job to serve as a "citizen posse" (after all, they had their own security guards patrolling the place), pilferage occurred so infrequently in the facility, it didn't even move the needle. Basically, employee theft was a non-issue. But persuading the union to act as informants would have been a huge issue, elevating a relatively picayune event to the level of Def-Con 4. Not surprisingly, the HR rep didn't get it; she took my refusal as an act of childish defiance.

There was another wrinkle here. The union already knew who the culprit was. Which shouldn't have come as any surprise, given that, sooner or later, we found out everything. The thief was a graveyard checker named "Fred." A trucker had seen him stealing the coupons, had told a trusted friend about it, and the friend, thinking the union president would want to know, came and told me.

We chose to handle it in accordance with our own code. We may not have had all the bells and whistles of other unions, but we had a code. A steward left an anonymous note for Fred

saying he'd been seen stealing coupons, that the company was on to him, and that if he valued his job, he needed to stop. If our warning kept him from stealing, it meant we had done right; if he got caught stealing in the future, then to hell with him, he deserved to be fired.

Back to the police union. One of the more obnoxious traits of policemen is their exaggerated, almost paranoid "Us vs. Them" mentality. For unionized cops, in that corner of the brain where a sense of union brotherhood is supposed to be implanted, there resides, instead, an almost pathological sense of institutional clannishness, one that all too easily leads to mindless, follow-the-leader conformity and sense of entitlement.

And it's that suffocating clannishness that drives them. Policemen see themselves as "special" not by virtue of being union members but by virtue of being policemen. The Thin Blue Line and all that. The Thin Blue Line that supposedly serves as a boundary between civilization and the jungle. Again, this has little to do with unionism, and everything to do with cop-ism.

As for compensation, big city police officers today—unlike those Boston patrolmen in 1919—no longer have to worry about being "poor." It was reported in the Los Angeles Times (1-11-15) that LAPD officers (who, at the time of the article, were involved in contract negotiations), make decent, middle-class wages.

New-hires get \$57,420, graduates straight out of the academy get \$60,500, and with longevity pay and bonuses, a veteran patrolman can earn as much as \$100,000. Upscale districts pay even more. The starting salary of a patrolman in swanky Beverly Hills is \$68,400.

Here's the way union leaders and labor writers see this whole thing. Because the majority of police officers (not unlike the professional baseball players union) regard themselves and their organization as vastly different from, and therefore superior to workaday unions, they are never going to be a meaningful part of the American labor movement.

That's because they are never going to have a significant role in it. The police are not joiners, they're not boosters, and they're not supporters. They're not even disinterested observers. In truth, most unionized policemen in the U.S. don't give one infinitesimal shit about the welfare of other unions.

Consider: If the police were to see a group of UAW members in the street, marching in protest, their first impulse would be to beat these protesters with sticks rather than allow them to pass without incident. It's true. Despite being union members themselves, these police officers' first thought would be to punish the marchers. And therein lies the paradox. **CP**

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THE BLACK STRUGGLE AGAINST SLAVERY

Slave Rebellions on the Open Seas

BY LOUIS PROYECT

Greg Grandin's *The Empire of Necessity: Slavery, Freedom and Deception in the New World* and Marcus Rediker's *The Amistad Rebellion: An Atlantic Odyssey of Slavery and Freedom* share both subject matter—slave rebellions on the open seas—and an unabashed commitment to the Black freedom struggle. Beyond the fortuitous combination of topic and political passion, however, the greatest reward for any reader is how both authors make history come alive. Despite their remoteness in time and place, the stories they tell have an obvious affinity for the Black struggle today as a new civil rights struggle takes shape to secure the final victory sought by ancestors Babo and Cinque.

The Empire of Necessity: Slavery, Freedom and Deception in the New World is an exploration of the events that inspired Herman Melville's *Benito Cereno*, an 1855 novella about the ruse orchestrated by slaves fifty years earlier to convince Captain Amasa Delano, a distant relative of FDR, that their vessel remained under their ex-master's sway. This excerpt from Melville should give you a flavor of this droll and macabre tale:

Three black boys, with two Spanish boys, were sitting together on the hatches, scraping a rude wooden platter, in which some scanty mess had recently been cooked. Suddenly, one of the black boys, enraged at a word dropped by one of his white companions, seized a knife, and though called to forbear by one of the oakum-pickers, struck the lad over the head, inflicting a gash from which blood flowed.

In amazement, Captain Delano inquired what this meant. To which the pale Benito dully muttered, that it was merely the sport of the lad.

“Pretty serious sport, truly,” rejoined Captain Delano. “Had such a thing happened on board the Bachelor's Delight, instant punishment would have followed.”

At these words the Spaniard turned upon the American one of his sudden, staring, half-lunatic looks; then, relapsing into his torpor, answered, “Doubtless, doubtless, Señor.”

If Grandin's history is a fitting counterpart to Melville's fiction, a work of high culture for the ages, we can see *The Amistad Rebellion: An Atlantic Odyssey of Slavery and*

Freedom as a necessary corrective to Stephen Spielberg's pop culture film that like his “Lincoln” told a tale of paternalistic white intervention when the real history would have revealed something much more like self-emancipation.

There's another important dimension to the history that will help scholars, both inside and outside the academy, understand the “peculiar institution”. Since both rebellions were carried out against Spanish masters, we are reminded of the global character of the slave trade—one that connected many different links in a great chain of commodity production. Whether a particular link was based on ostensibly capitalist property relations such as the Birmingham textile mills or “non-capitalist” relations such as those that obtained on sugar or cotton plantations, they were all necessary for the functioning of an emerging global economic system.

The slaves who rose up against Benito Cereno died an unceremonious death, largely as a result of the absence of an abolitionist movement to take up their cause in a geographically remote and politically inhospitable South America. Since the *Amistad* had the relatively good fortune to come under American naval control in the waters off New England, the basis for a broad-based solidarity campaign rooted in the abolitionist movement existed. Rediker amasses a wealth of detail to demonstrate its power, even if at times it manifested the same sort of paternalism that can be found in Spielberg's movie. It was not as if Spielberg was making things up, it was more that he decided to leave key details out.

Amasa Delano was a Captain Ahab writ small. Although he had ambitions to strike it rich on the open seas, he never could raise the capital to finance whaling expeditions. Setting his sights a bit lower but about the same level ethically, he decided to hunt seals that were valued for their skins, the perfect material for lady's mittens and gentleman's wallets.

Aboard his ship, the *Perseverance*, Delano set sail for the west coast of Chile in 1800, an area dotted with islands overflowing with immense seal populations. In his account of his various sea voyages, a source of Melville's novella, he shows not the slightest remorse for the bloody labor that sometimes involved a military-like assault on as many as 20,000 seals at a time.

As fate would have it, Delano encountered Benito Cerreño's (the actual spelling) *Tryal* in the waters near Santa Maria Island off the coast of Chile in 1805. Like the *Amistad* rebels, their brethren lacked the navigational skills to return to Africa on their own and thus ordered Cerreño to sail them home. In the same deceptive manner as the *Amistad*'s Captain Ramón Ferrer, Cerreño stalled for time, hoping to encounter another ship that could intercede on his behalf.

The slaves who had taken over the *Tryal* had been through a prolonged ordeal, including a forced march through the freezing Andes toward a seaport where they would put on board a ship destined for Lima and sold to the highest bidder. They seized their opportunity on December 22, 1804 after the

ship had set sail. Led by Babo and Mori, they overpowered their guards, seized weapons and executed 18 sailors, stabbing and hacking some to death, throwing others overboard.

In a stunning command of his material, Grandin makes a strong case that there was every possibility that the rebels were committed Muslims. As such, they were forerunners of many of the fighters in the news today, even if they saw their struggle more in terms of simply returning home rather than global jihad. For the Tryal rebels, their religion was simply a way for them to stay united and to sustain morale in the face of insurmountable odds in the same way that Christianity served Blacks in the American south.

Grandin surmises that Babo and Mori were lettered men, possibly educated in madrassas. When they forced Cerreño to sign a contract granting their freedom, they were following Islamic customs. Finally, the respect that the enslaved men and women had for Babo suggests that he might have been a marabout (cleric) or faqih (scholar) in his native country.

Grandin refers his readers to another slave revolt that took place just four years earlier on the San Juan as it was rounding the Cape Horn. This time they succeeded in forcing the captain to sail them back to Senegal and to freedom. When the Viceroy of Peru learned of this outrage, he urged the Crown to ban the importation of Muslim slaves into South America, writing that the teaching of Mohammad led slaves to “spread very perverse ideas among their own kind”, adding “And there are so many of them.”

Like many children of the Enlightenment, the two men most responsible for suppressing the rebellious slaves were all for the democratic republic but only if it was on the basis of white supremacy.

Hailing from Duxbury, Massachusetts, Captain Amasa Delano joined a rebel militia to fight the British. While traditional liberal and much Marxist historiography viewed 1776 as a noble revolutionary movement against British colonial tyranny, recent research questions this interpretation. In the provocatively titled *The Counter-Revolution of 1776*, Gerald Horne demonstrates that slaves were drawn to the British side for no other reason than the Crown’s opposition to slavery. Such a paradox illustrates the principle that history does not move in a straight line.

When Delano took control of the Tryal, his main goal was to be compensated for the value of the returned property—including the slaves. The judge who presided over the litigation between Delano and the Spanish owners was one Juan Martinez de Rozas, an admirer of Napoleon who met secretly with freethinkers influenced by Voltaire and Rousseau. Rozas’s opposition to the monarchy, like Delano’s, was qualified by a belief that only white men had the right to be free. The captured slaves were represented in court by the 19th century’s version of a public defender who argued that they had the right to rise up against their captors in the same way that Spanish prisoners of war had the right to murder British

jailors. His reasoning was virtually identical to that of John Quincy Adams, the attorney for the Amistad rebels. Despite, or perhaps because of, his republicanism, Rozas found the slaves guilty of murder and had them executed.

If the stance of Delano and Rozas challenges conventional thinking about the clash between bourgeois democracy and slavery, there is even more to puzzle over in *The Empire of Necessity* when it comes to the social and economic role of slavery in South America. Over the past few years, a number of books have appeared that challenge orthodox Marxist thinking on the supposed incompatibility between capitalism and slavery. Perhaps it should be described instead as a new orthodoxy since in years past Eric Williams’s *Capitalism and Slavery* probably spoke for most Marxists in making the case for their organic ties, especially in the supply of cotton to British textile mills.

In helping to reestablish Eric Williams to his rightful place in Marxist theory, Grandin describes a world that combined contradictory elements of free and unfree labor unlike anything found in the slave states. Grandin writes:

Slaves literally made money: working in Lima’s mint, they trampled quicksilver into ore with their bare feet, pressing toxic mercury into their bloodstream in order to amalgamate the silver used for coins. And they were money, at least in a way. It wasn’t so much that the value of individual slaves was standardized in relation to currency. Slaves were the standard: when appraisers calculated the value of any given hacienda, slaves usually accounted for over half its worth, much more valuable than inanimate capital goods like tools and millworks.

The world was changing fast, old lines of rank and status were blurring, and slaves, along with livestock and land, often appeared to be the last substantial things. Slaves didn’t just create wealth: as items of conspicuous consumption for a rising merchant class, they displayed wealth. And since some slaves in Spanish America, especially those in cities like Montevideo and Buenos Aires, were paid wages, they were also consumers, spending their money on items that arrived in ships with other slaves or maybe even, in a few instances, with themselves.

Turning now to Rediker’s *The Amistad Rebellion: An Atlantic Odyssey of Slavery and Freedom*, we encounter the same understanding of the links between “the peculiar institution” and global capitalism through his fascinating exegesis of an anonymous abolitionist pamphlet that circulated in England in 1792. Titled “Cushoo: a dialogue between a Negro and English Gentleman on the Horrors of Slavery and the Slave Trade”, it allows Cushoo, an African slave, to explain why slavery is not only evil but in terms that anticipated Eric

Williams's "Capitalism and Slavery":

In 1792, at the peak of a broad popular agitation against the slave trade in Great Britain, an abolitionist published an anonymous pamphlet, in which Cushoo, an African who had been enslaved in Jamaica, engaged an English gentleman, aptly named Mr. English, in conversation. Cushoo had been owned by a friend of Mr. English. He begins by saying, "Ah! Massa Buckra, pity poor Negroman." Mr. English responds, "Why, Cushoo, what's the matter?" The matter, in short, was capitalism and slavery—more specifically, how a violent, exploitative global system hid its true nature in the benign form of commodities, especially slave labor-produced sugar and rum, the likes of which Mr. English and others around the world consumed, without understanding how they were produced and at what human cost.

For perhaps the first time in history a member of a mass movement for fundamental social change had made a simultaneous popular critique of the exploitation of labor, the commodity form, and the capitalist world market. In this scenario, consumers were unconscious vampires.

Nobody could have accused the Spanish owners of the *Amistad* as unconscious but vampires they surely were.

In chilling detail, Rediker describes a systematic brutality that characterized the slave trade, particularly the shipment to the Americas in the infamous Middle Passage.

The lower decks of a typical slave ship would be no taller than 48 inches, forcing the slaves to maintain a crouching position for weeks. In Freetown, Liberia where a number of liberated slaves lived, it was not uncommon to see young men and women walking stooped over as if they had osteoporosis.

The men, women and children who would eventually board the *Amistad* came to Havana in 1839 after surviving the Middle Passage on the *Teçora*, a Brazilian vessel. From there, they were soon put on the *Amistad*, a smaller coastal trader that would transport them to their next destination, another part of Cuba where they might be put to work on a sugar plantation. The duress of the trans-Atlantic trip on the *Teçora* and uncertainty about their fate made them feel desperate and willing to chance everything in an onboard insurrection.

Chapter two, titled "Rebellion", details the bold takeover of the *Amistad*, an event that Spielberg's film portrays more as an atavistic massacre than an act of liberation akin to the Warsaw Ghetto uprising. Rediker describes the deep oppression that the slaves had to deal with, from being restrained by neck-rings that an African named Kinna described as how "dey chain ox" to being terrorized by whips, clubs, and fists. None of this is depicted in Spielberg's film, which begins with the assault on the ship's crew amidst yells of terror.

When the ship's cook, a slave himself but one much more like a "house slave", maliciously teases the captives that they will all be killed—gesturing with a kitchen knife drawn across his neck—they decide that they must rebel or die.

Despite coming from different tribes and speaking as much as fifteen different languages, the slaves united into a fighting force under the leadership of Cinque who was likely an experienced warrior. Since two of the 49 slaves were blacksmiths, it was easy for them to pick their locks and free the remainder of the men who formed a brigade armed with clubs, machetes and other weapons gathered on deck. After a pitched and bloody battle, the Africans gained control of the ship and ordered Captain Ramón Ferrer to take them back to Africa.

Another major failing of Spielberg's Hollywood version of the trial of the *Amistad* rebels was the virtual disappearance of the mass movement that made court victories possible. As was the case with "Lincoln", it was intervention by enlightened whites that made the day—particularly the case made on their behalf by John Quincy Adams before the Supreme Court. While Adams surely was a hero, it was up to Marcus Rediker to pay homage to some dedicated but obscure abolitionist activists.

For Spielberg it is notables like abolitionist attorney Roger S. Baldwin (played by Matthew McConaughey of all people) who have major roles while a much more interesting grass roots activist like Dwight Janes gets ignored. Janes was a grocer by trade who made the initial contact with Cinque and his comrades. After meeting with them, he wrote letters to prominent individuals to stress the need for rallying around their cause. Janes invested so much time and energy into their defense that a reporter for the pro-slavery *New York Morning Herald* could barely contain his admiration when he referred to "the Abolitionists are moving heaven and earth to effect their release; several members of the society have left town for Connecticut to see them, to employ the most able counsel in their behalf, and to contest every point inch by inch; and, judging from appearances, we should say that there are general preparations making in all quarters for a grand explosion in this matter of slavery and the slave trade."

It was people like Dwight Janes who upheld the republican ideals of 1776 but understood that they were meaningless unless they applied to all human beings. Twenty-two years after the *Amistad* rebellion and the vindication of its fighters, the United States would be tested by a civil war that would finally put an end to slavery. Now, 150 years after that monumental struggle, we are facing a new challenge to racism led by young people who would be inspired by the example of the *Tryal* and *Amistad* rebellions. For them and for all Americans committed to the struggle for racial equality, Greg Grandin and Marcus Rediker's books could not have come at a better time. **CP**

LOUIS PROYECT IS THE MODERATOR OF THE MARXISM MAILING LIST. IN HIS SPARE TIME, HE REVIEWS FILMS FOR COUNTERPUNCH.

Irreverence is My Only Sacred Cow

Muhammad, Charlie, and Me

BY PAUL KRASSNER

When the news broke about killing cartoonists in Paris, Michael Dooley sent me an email: "I'm writing the intro to a feature that *Print* magazine will post online about the tragedy, and I'd like to include a comment from you. Any angle you want to approach it from is fine. Possible to email it to me at your soonest convenience, please?"

My hurried reply:

This massacre is an awesome outrage, even to liberals and conservatives alike [HBO left-wing comedian Bill Maher and Fox News right-wing journalist Bernard Goldberg had in common their plea urging newspapers to publish the offensive *Charlie* cartoons], although some dinosaur Republicans might try to blame Obama.

It's a horrendous violation of basic semantic principles, such as 'The menu is not the meal' and 'The map is not the territory.' As an atheist, I perceive the irony of those assassins shouting "God is great" to justify their insane act in the name of a deity that I believe doesn't exist.

And what could happen in America? Security guards protecting the *Onion* offices? Treat *Funny or Die* as Islamic marching orders? Invade the cyberspace of NBC for broadcasting *Saturday Night Live* until it morphs into *Saturday Night Dead* if it's not already deceased?

Religions continue to rationalize their dogma, from birth to death—and then comes the hereafter for these Muslim murderers where all those virgins supposedly waiting to greet them in Nirvana are busy reading *Lysistrata*. OMG has declared war on LOL.

I forwarded that to some cartoonist friends. Decades-long *New Yorker* contributor Mort Gerberg responded, "Clap, clap! Neatly done--although my own thought might be that LOL has morphed into OMG. And that would include an email request sent this afternoon by *New Yorker* cartoon editor Bob Mankoff to cartoonists, inviting them to submit 'cartoons in response to the tragedy to post tomorrow on the website...'"

I told Gerberg my idea for a cartoon that I would've assigned to an artist if I were still publishing *The Realist*. He drew the one below and submitted it to the *New Yorker*. It was

rejected. So were four other submissions, including an artist seeing a headline, "French Cartoonists Murdered," and thinking, "Up until now, I always thought that being one of an endangered species was just something I imagined."

I suddenly got a feeling of *déjà vu*, from back when the *New Yorker* would reject a cartoon, then Gerberg (among others) would send the artwork to me, and I would publish it in *The Realist*. I also felt a flash of *déjà vu* about the great Muhammad cartoon controversy a decade ago. I found it simultaneously tragic and absurd to witness the death and destruction triggered by Danish cartoonists' illustrations of the Islamic prophet, serving as a reflection of so much unspeakable anguish caused by religious wars and fueled by oil.

America certainly has its own share of dangerous fanatics. George Bush was personally prompted by God: "God would tell me, 'George, go and end the tyranny in Iraq.' And I did." In July 2003, during a meeting with Palestinian Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas, Bush told the newly elected leader, "God told me to strike at Al-Qaeda and I struck them, and then He instructed me to strike at Saddam, which I did. And now I am determined to solve the problem in the Middle East. If you help me, I will act, and if not, the elections will come and I will have to focus on them."

Apparently, religious bigotry runs in the family. Bush's father, the former president: "I don't know that atheists should be considered citizens, nor should they be considered patriots. This is one nation under God." And before him, there was Ronald Reagan: "For the first time ever, everything is in place for the Battle of Armageddon and the Second Coming of Christ." Not to mention Reagan's Secretary of the Interior, James Watt, responsible for national policy on the environment: "We don't have to protect the environment--the Second Coming is at hand." In 1966, Lyndon Johnson told the Austrian ambassador that the diety "comes and speaks to me about two o'clock in the morning when I have to give the word to the boys, and I get the word from God whether to bomb or not." Apparently there's some kind of bipartisan theological tradition of delusionary leaders going on in the White House.

But getting back to the cartoons that made terrorists reek with revenge for something they considered to be rotten in Denmark, and there were different kinds of retaliation. A military commander for the ousted Taliban in Afghanistan was quoted in Arab newspapers as claiming that the Taliban had recruited at least 100 new suicide bombers as a result of the cartoons. And the BBC reported that the Arab boycott of Danish food products was costing the Danish company Aria millions per day. The company complained that full-page ads they took out in Saudi Arabia, explaining that they had nothing to do with the cartoons, had no effect. In Iran, as if imitating our own country changing the name of French fries to "Freedom fries," those wishing to purchase Danish pastry now had to ask for "Roses of the Prophet Muhammad."

“Meanwhile,” Pulitzer Prize-winning editorial cartoonist Joel Pett stated, “fearing editorial censors, not to mention firebrand jihadists, U.S. cartoonists did a lot of self-censoring. Plenty of people pointed to what they said was the hypocrisy of the Muslim reaction to the Danish cartoons, given how often the Arab press publishes hateful images of Jews. An Iranian editor raised the stakes when he announced that his paper would challenge cartoonists to debunk the Holocaust, a crime in several European countries.” One cartoon featured Holocaust victim Anne Frank in bed with Adolf Hitler after having sex. Hitler says, “Write *this* one in your diary, Anne.” But at least Jews don’t murder such offensive artists; the Anti-Defamation League just complains about ‘em.

Not all American artists shied away from reacting to the Danish cartoon controversy. My favorite was Wiley Miller’s syndicated comic strip, *Non Sequitur*, depicted a sidewalk artist who “finally achieves his goal to be the most feared man in the world,” his placard advertising “Caricatures of Muhammad While You Wait!” Which brings us back to the present. This time, Wiley showed a woman telling her husband, “You know, I shouldn’t have to ask, but...do you feel lucky?” They had come upon a sidewalk artist with a sign: “Caution—Unrestricted Cartooning Zone Ahead.”

The poignant irony at a rally of millions in the streets of Paris was triggered by a woman who opened her window, playing music for the crowd, and when John Lennon’s song “Imagine” boomed out, a great many citizens spontaneously sang along with the lyrics, “Imagine there’s no heaven/ It’s easy if you try...Nothing to kill or die for/ And no religion too.”

The first email I got in the wake of the shock in Paris came from Bill Griffith, creator of the syndicated comic strip *Zippy*. He wrote, “I feel like an oppressed minority for the first time today,” accompanied by his pinhead character saying, “I’m not having fun” and “I am Charlie.” Incidentally, *Charlie* was named after Charlie Brown in the *Peanuts* strip. Good grief!

Frequent *Realist* contributor artist Richard Guindon wrote, “It seems to me that they were doing what you did all those many years ago. Sixty years? No response could top the drawing of the armed assassin saying about the dead cartoonist in front of him, ‘He drew first.’ A brilliant summation.” And another contributor, artist Trina Robbins, commented, “If cartoonists don’t draw satirical cartoons of Muhammad, the terrorists will have won.”

R. Crumb, who now lives in France, was aware that the Prophet’s face was not to be caricatured, so when the Paris paper *Liberation* requested a cartoon, Crumb sketched a self-portrait holding up his cartoon of a hairy ass. What ever could have topped that? Well, how about the cartoon by British artist Gerald Scarfe, showing Prime Minister Tony Blair’s unhappy face being squeezed out of George Bush’s presidential anus? And was Karl “Turd Blossom” Rove jealous?

The *Los Angeles Times* didn’t allow the offensive *Charlie*

Hebdo’s cartoons to accompany its reportage. Although the *Washington Post* position was, “We have a practice of avoiding the publication of material that is pointedly, deliberately, or needlessly offensive to religious groups,” the *Post* ultimately decided to publish the cover of the recovered *Charlie Hebdo* issue, as well as the cartoon that had prompted the 2011 firebombing of *Charlie*’s offices, depicting Muhammad saying, “100 lashes of the whip if you don’t die laughing.”

The *New York Times* stated, “Under *Times* standards, we do not normally publish images or other material deliberately intended to offend religious sensibilities. After careful consideration, *Times* editors decided that describing the cartoons in question would give readers sufficient information to understand today’s story.” However, *USA Today* “traditionally does not show images of Muhammad to avoid offending Muslim readers. But the magazine cover has enough news value to warrant its publication in this case.”

NBC News—including MSNBC and CNBC—proclaimed that the network would not be showing “headlines or cartoons that could be viewed as insensitive or offensive.” ABC suits followed suit. Although CBS had no explicit ban of Muhammad cartoons, producers were instructed to exercise judgment. Fox News had “no plans to show the cartoons,” but published them online. Judy Woodruff said “PBS has decided not to show the cartoon of the Prophet as they had decided it was in bad taste.” And NPR’s Eleanor Beardsley described *Charlie Hebdo* as “gross” and “in poor taste.” After all, the magazine published a cartoon depicting a member of the Islamic State group beheading Muhammad. *Bloomberg News* published that image.

CNN described the cartoons, but held back from actually showing them. CNN president Jeff Zucker explained, “As managers, protecting and taking care of the safety of our employees around the world is more important right now.” Associated Press announced, “It’s been our policy for years that we refrain from moving deliberately provocative images.” Glenn Beck complained, “AP has proven themselves now to be liars and dishonest and disingenuous. AP has said they’re not going to show the Islamic cartoon, but they did show *Piss Christ*.”

Artist David Horsey said, “In Muslim countries from Niger to Pakistan, mobs have responded to the *Charlie Hebdo* cartoons with rioting, shootings and church burnings.” His colleague, Ted Rall, pointed out that “More fulltime staff political cartoonists were killed in Paris on Wednesday than may be employed at newspapers in the states of California, Texas and New York combined. More fulltime staff cartoonists were killed in Paris on Wednesday than work at all American magazines and websites combined. There’s only one full-time staff political cartoonist at a website: Matt Bors. None at a magazine.”

Rall’s strips appear in nearly 100 newspapers in the United States. He once drew a cartoon about Muhammad, but

his distributors refused to send it out. “I posted it to my own website,” he said, “and sent it out to the newspapers that were willing to publish it, which, as far as I know, were very few. Part of the real issue here is not so much the cartoonists being timid. The problem really is the newspapers and magazines unwilling to take a chance.”

Social media to the rescue. *I Am Charlie* was tweeted nearly four million times. And several websites—including *Huffington Post*, the *Daily Beast*, *Gawker*, *Slate*, *Vox*, *Business Insider*—presented some of *Charlie’s* provocative covers.

At the risk of revealing my false humility, allow me to quote from an article in *Time* that concludes with an left-handed compliment: “Perhaps the satire magazine that most closely resembles *Charlie Hebdo* in terms of inflammatory imagery was *The Realist* [1958-2001] created by Paul Krassner. The most notorious items from this publication appeared in 1967, including the “Disneyland Memorial Orgy” [now a poster], an

When word got out that *The Realist* was going to publish that item, I was contacted by newspapers, magazines, wire services, radio and TV news departments, and various foreign correspondents.

The *New York Times* sent a reporter to my office to make sure that *The Realist* had gotten into the mails and onto the newsstands. Later, the night city editor of the *Times* sent a messenger to pick up a copy of the *Daily News* as soon as it hit the streets, because there was a rumor that the *News* was going to break the story, and if it did, then the *Times* would too, but the *News* didn’t, so the *Times* didn’t either. (The most frequently asked question at the *Daily News* Information Bureau was whether the rumor was true.)

Newsweek sent over a pair of researchers who interviewed me for two hours. “We’ve been waiting for somebody to break this story,” said one. I asked, “Why didn’t you break it?” And the answer was one word: “Fear.” A *Time* magazine researcher



illustration of classic animated Disney characters engaged in a variety of obscene acts, and ‘The Part Left Out of the Kennedy Book,’ a graphic short story containing a scene in which Lyndon B. Johnson sexually penetrates John F. Kennedy’s corpse...”

Early in 1962, I heard a rumor that JFK had been married previous to Jackie Kennedy, and I got a tip that there was a genealogy which actually listed the alleged previous marriage. I decided to check it out as a matter of routine procedure, and sure enough, *The Blauvelt Family Genealogy*, published in 1957, had the listing on page 884, Under Eleventh Generation. The rumor had now become the basis of a valid news report, so I called the White House to get their prepared denial.

told me, “If anybody picks up this story from *The Realist*, then *Time* will jump in with both feet.”

Associated Press dispatched the story and it became front-page news. The *New York Post* headline: “JFK Wed Before? White House Says No.” *Newsweek* broke the story, with a reprint in advance by the *Washington Post*. *Newsweek* stated: “The story first appeared in a beatnik Greenwich Village magazine of slight circulation, *The Realist*.” When the genealogy-denial report hit the newspapers, it also broke on radio and TV. There was a memo on the bulletin board in the NBC newsroom ordering broadcasters not to carry the story in any form until it broke in some other medium or on some other network.

Time carried a two-page article, which stated: “In the absence of forthright denials, the story—and the rumors—grew. Last March, *The Realist*, a shabby Greenwich Village periodical, published the fact of the Blauvelt genealogical entry as an ‘expose.’” Now, more than fifty years later, *Time* ambiguously acknowledges my work by comparing it with Charlie Hebdo.

However, my friend Alan Myerson, who in 1963 founded The Committee improvisational theater in San Francisco, said, “I do have one thought though about the fundamental difference between that ‘shabby Greenwich Village periodical’ and Charlie Hebdo—The Realist tended to take on the powerful whether Disney or the presidents while Charlie Hebdo took on a basically despised minority in France. Easy pickings while you never took that path more traveled.” He articulated what I had been feeling, triggered by Charlie not poking their own government for making schoolgirls criminals if they wear head-scarfs.

On CriticWire, Sam Adams wrote: “As pointed out by *Time*’s James Poniewozik, the 2010 South Park episode which parodied Comedy Central’s decision to censor images of Muhammad from an earlier episode, is still not available to watch in uncensored form, and is not available for streaming anywhere. Comedy Central, which is owned by Viacom, the world’s fourth-largest entertainment conglomerate, massively censored the episode before it aired, using audio bleeps to obscure not only mentions of Mohammad’s name but several entire monologues, including one where Jesus Christ (this is South Park, after all) concludes, ‘Don’t you see...if you don’t want to be made fun of anymore, all you need are guns and bombs to get people to stop.’

“Fortunately, some intrepid hackers found their way into Comedy Central’s servers and downloaded an un-Bowdlerized copy. Watch it, and think about the fact that the company that continues to suppress it also owns Paramount Pictures and more than 160 cable networks. It doesn’t take fanatics with guns to kill freedom of speech, just corporations with stockholders where their spines should be.”

As for me, it’s been a liberating pleasure to communicate without compromise. Irreverence is my only sacred cow. **CP**

PAUL KRASSNER IS THE EDITOR OF *The Realist*. HIS BOOKS INCLUDE: *Pot Stories for the Soul*, *One Hand Jerking* AND *Murder at the Conspiracy Convention*.

Resistance is Futile

How Big Pharma Keeps Antibiotics in Our Food

BY MARTHA ROSENBERG

Antibiotic resistance, bacteria adapting to the most widely-used antibiotics, is getting worse. Before the discovery of antibiotics, people could *and did* die from a simple cut warns Dr. Sameer Patel, an infectious disease specialist at Lurie Children’s Hospital in Chicago and those days are returning.

Recently I caught up with Senior Staff Scientist at Consumers Union Dr. Michael Hansen to ask how the latest FDA guidance on antibiotic resistance was working out. Announced in late 2013, the guidance asked Big Pharma companies selling antibiotics to farms to *voluntarily* restrict antibiotic use/sales by changing the approved uses on their labels. Right. Antibiotics are given by the ton to healthy farm animals because they make animals gain weight with less food. Most public health groups indict farm use of antibiotics for fostering antibiotic resistant bacteria.

The new FDA guidance caused Pharma companies who make antibiotics for livestock to remove “growth production” from the approved use on their labels, he told me, but the companies have largely just replaced the approved use with “disease prevention” and are still routinely using the drugs.

One chilling example of how the label change has not removed antibiotics is seen in feedlots, said Dr. Hansen. Feeding cattle grain instead of a more natural diet produces a high level of liver abscesses, he said and feedlot operators routinely give them the antibiotic Tylosin for the abscesses thus “preventing disease.” Tylosin reduces abscess incidence by 40 to 70 percent in such cattle according to medical journals.

Investigations by *Consumer Reports*, the magazine published by Consumers Union, reveal that U.S. meat is full of “pathogens, commensals and antibiotic resistant bacteria” regardless of the meat’s source, Dr. Hansen told us—including producers who advertise as being antibiotic-free! A stellar example of such contaminated poultry was the mega poultry producer Foster Farms who was linked to a 29-state outbreak of drug-resistant Salmonella Heidelberg only a few months ago, Dr. Hansen told us. Six-hundred and thirty-four people were sickened and federal lawmakers urged that the operations be shut down. Previously, I reported that pork tested by *Consumer Reports* contained five resistant bacteria strains.

Many reporters on the conference call that announced the new guidance with the FDA’s Michael Taylor, deputy commissioner for foods and veterinary medicine, William T. Flynn, deputy director for science policy and the USDA’s Thomas J. Myers, associate deputy administrator, were shocked at the answers from the high level administrators.

If the plan is voluntary “what will enforce” the restrictions

asked an incredulous ABC reporter. Food operations will do it themselves “for their own reasons” said Taylor.

Won’t farmers “have to move to different buildings” asked a reporter from Reuters if they actually phase out antibiotics? (Antibiotic use enables animals to be squeezed together in conditions that would otherwise cause disease.) That’s why we are giving industry three years to comply replied William Flynn.

Will you identify Pharma companies who do not comply with your request asked another reporter. No, said Flynn, but we will give an “overview” of the level of “engagement” of industry.

Reaction from Congresswoman Louise M. Slaughter, to the guidance was swift. It was “an inadequate response to the growing antibiotic resistant crisis caused by overuse of antibiotics on the farm,” said her office—also pointing out that industry has spent over \$17 million to block the Antibiotics for Medical Treatment Act of 2007 which Rep. Slaughter and the late Sen. Ted Kennedy promoted. “It seems scarcely believable that these precious medications could be fed by the ton to chickens and pigs,” wrote Kennedy in the bill, noting that up to 70 percent of all U.S. antibiotics go to livestock.

When the FDA tried in 2008 to ban farm use of cephalosporins (antibiotics like Cefzil and Keflex) because they are needed for pneumonia, strep throat and other serious human conditions, the egg, chicken, turkey, milk, pork and cattle industries and the Animal Health Institute stormed Capitol Hill.

We can’t “farm” without antibiotics whined the Big Meat players. They cried that they would need more land because animals couldn’t be squeezed together and sickness would break out. They cried that consumers would end up paying more for meat if animals ate more and had more room. One ag industry rep even threatened lawmakers with *more manure* because the animals would eat more.

After the hearings, W. Ron DeHaven, DVM, the USDA’s top veterinarian before leaving for the industry-beholden American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), penned a rambling, almost incoherent 18-page letter to lawmakers which added another reason to Big Meat’s objections: restricting antibiotics would heighten terrorism/food insecurity risks he wrote. The pleas were transparent appeals for Big Meat to retain its profit margins but the FDA backed down.

A University of Iowa study in 2010 found MRSA (Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*) in 70 percent of hogs on farms studied and 64 percent of workers; resistant infections have even been found on an unopened soft drink can in a car following a poultry truck. Ninety-three percent of doctors worry about the meat industry’s excessive use of antibiotics.

Still, says the Animal Health Institute (which lists major drug companies Abbott, Bayer Healthcare, Elanco/Lilly, Merck, Boehringer Ingelheim Vetmedica, Novartis and more

as members), “There is no scientific evidence that antibiotics used in food animals have any significant impact on the effectiveness of antibiotics in people.” A “bee sting” is a bigger human threat.

A recent investigation by Reuters suggest otherwise. It found the major U.S. poultry firms--Tyson Foods, Pilgrim’s Pride, Perdue Farms, George’s and Koch Foods--are using antibiotics “more pervasively than regulators realize.” KFC-supplier Koch Foods, for example, said “We do not administer antibiotics at growth promotion doses” on its website, but documents from the mills that make its feed to its specifications indicated otherwise, said Reuters. (“I regret the wording” Mark Kaminsky, Koch’s chief financial officer, later told Reuters).

Similarly, Pilgrim’s Pride’s feed mill records show the antibiotics bacitracin and monensin are added “to every ration fed to a flock grown early this year,” said Reuters. (Tipped off about the documents, Pilgrim’s Pride threatened legal action against Reuters.)

Even though two million people a year get antibiotic-resistant bacterial infections in the U.S. and 23,000 die, Dr. Hansen believes the situation is not all bad. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the World Food Organization and even President Obama have recently ramped up the call for swift action against antibiotic use on farms, he told me. Countries like Denmark and Sweden have demonstrated that farm restriction reduces antibiotic resistance and can serve as a model. There are even signs of a new level of cooperation with some major U.S. chicken producers, Dr. Hansen said.

I also spoke to Dr. Susan Boyle-Vavra, who, as lab director for the University of Chicago’s MRSA Research Center, is at the “ground zero” of antibiotic resistance. Even though agricultural use of antibiotics accounts for most resistance she told us, health care practitioners are doing their part to limit the drugs’ use. At the University of Chicago and other hospitals, “stewardship” programs to protect the effectiveness of key antibiotics are being implemented in which one arm of a health care facility monitors another. Doctors in such stewardship programs are required to supply the reason for prescribing a “protected” antibiotic and the reason for its continued usage. “The protected antibiotics can no longer just be taken off the shelf,” said Dr. Boyle-Vavra and the programs are already showing positive results.

Still, Dr. Hansen told me, medical use of antibiotics is not nearly the problem it is on the nation’s farms. “After all, people don’t stay on antibiotics for life,” he says. **CP**

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CULTURE & REVIEWS

Elvis, Race and the Poor South

All Shook Up

BY LEE BALLINGER

In 1835, South Carolina judge William Harper declared that “A slave cannot be a white man.” Vernon Presley, Elvis’s father, probably would have disagreed. Convicted of check fraud in 1938, Vernon was sentenced to three years at Mississippi’s notorious Parchman Farm penitentiary.

“Parchman Farm was essentially a twenty thousand acre plantation,” writes Joel Williamson in *Elvis Presley: A Southern Life* (\$34.95, Oxford University Press). “[It was] spread over a six by eight mile rectangle that used hundreds of convict laborers to produce a cash crop, cotton, for the benefit of the state.”

When Vernon Presley arrived at Parchman Farm, thirty per cent of the inmates were white. “Vernon lived in all-white Camp 5,” Williamson writes. “White drivers drove the men before them in the fields, just like slavery. If the task was to chop the grass away from the stalk of the cotton plant using a hoe, each man would have a row to hoe. If there were 150 men, they would work 150 rows simultaneously, forming a long line moving across the field. The driver would ride behind on his horse, carrying a bull whip used to reprimand laggards.

“There would be several shooters for every hundred men. When the men were working in a field, the shooters would draw a “gun line” around the field. Any man crossing the line without permission from the shooters automatically became a target.”

One of the inmates doing time at

Parchman while Vernon was there was bluesman Bukka White. When White was released, he went to Chicago where he recorded “Parchman Farm Blues,” which described what life had been like for himself, Vernon Presley, and thousands of other men.

If you wanna do good, you better stay off Parchman Farm

We got to work in the mornin’, just at the dawn of day

Just at the settin’ of the sun, that’s when the work is done

Vernon’s father and grandmother were sharecroppers and Presley family poverty stretched back well before that. “Through the generations of nation-building, of exploration and settlement and industrialization, [Elvis’s] ancestors stayed almost invisible,” writes Daniel Wolff in *How Lincoln Learned to Read: Twelve Great Americans and the Education That Made Them*. “White against the white planks of weathered shacks, white against the constant landscape of cotton, they seemed to disappear. As if they didn’t count, left no marks. As if they were nothing.”

But the nothings were trying to become something. Before Elvis was born in 1935 (with the doctor’s fee paid by welfare), Vernon Presley and his wife Gladys had moved to Tupelo in northeast Mississippi. They were part of a massive Southern migration from country to city. The city of Tupelo built the first concrete roads in Mississippi. It was first to receive electricity from the Tennessee Valley Authority (somewhat prophetic given the role that one of its native sons would play in the history of electric rock & roll).

Elvis was country, true enough—in his sixth grade class picture he’s barefoot and wearing overalls. Yet he grew up where, as Daniel Wolff writes:

...the trains stopped, where people worked in factories,

where he could walk to the movies. What he’d learned so far—in school and out—depended on a city mix of people and influences.

A cotton-processing mill was built in Tupelo in the 1920s over the objections of the local landed gentry, who feared that the lure of factory work would destroy their tenant farming system. To keep the old elite happy, the mill hired only whites, keeping blacks in the fields. The majority of its workforce was female, forcing most local white males to remain tenant farmers.

But the die had been cast. The cotton mill attracted garment factories. A Carnation milk plant opened up. Across the South, the nothings wanted to become something. Union organizers became a common sight, while governors in textile states ordered out the National Guard to protect the mills. After wages were repeatedly cut in Tupelo, the United Textile Workers came to town. In mid-April 1938 (shortly before Vernon was sentenced) union organizer Jimmie Cox was kidnapped, whipped and told that if he didn’t leave Mississippi he would be killed.

Vernon Presley’s check fraud case occurred in the midst of all this. Vernon pled not guilty but his plea came too late for him to be tried during the court’s fall term. His case had to wait until spring. He was promptly convicted and sentenced to three years at Parchman Farm. The six months he spent in the county jail over the winter were not subtracted from his sentence.

When Vernon got out of Parchman Farm, he was reunited with his family in Tupelo. He was unable to find steady work and the Presleys eventually lost their house and had to move into a rental in Shake Rag, Tupelo’s black ghetto.

In November 1948, the Presleys headed for Tennessee. Wolff notes that “the move to Memphis was the next logical step in the long migration: off the farm and into the future.”

No one anticipated that the future would include Elvis becoming one of the biggest stars on the planet. Before that happened, when he was just a regional act and still living with his parents in Memphis, Elvis would often reverse the journey from country to city. In January 1955, he began a tour in the heart of the Delta in Clarksdale, Mississippi, went west across the Mississippi River to play Helena, Arkansas, then Marianna, Arkansas, and Shreveport. The tour then re-

The Supreme Court decision of 1954 that ordered school integration hung heavy in the air throughout this period, as implementation and resistance loomed on the horizon. The stark black versus white nature of the situation in the Deep South caused many to see Elvis as a cultural outsider, a thief of black music. This accusation has been made continuously ever since.

*Elvis was a hero to most
But he never meant shit to me you see*

which the man in the white buck shoes comes across stiff and bewildered.

Elvis grew up in a segregated world but he didn't grow up separate from blacks. Joel Williamson describes a typical weekend for Elvis in Shake Rag: "On Saturday afternoons, he walked past the bustling black businesses. On Saturday nights, he sensed all around him the excitement—music, talking, dancing, drinking, wooing, and fighting. Then, on Sunday mornings, he witnessed the gatherings of worship-



Parchman Prison band, 1933. Photo: Mississippi Historical Society.

crossed the river to play through north-eastern Mississippi and northwestern Alabama at Booneville, Corinth, and Sheffield. It ended at the National Guard Armory in Sikeston, Missouri.

This was typical. As his career was gathering steam, Elvis performed mainly, as Williamson writes, "through the black belt South, first in places where the numbers of black people relative to white people ran highest and where the tension over integration was greatest—from east Arkansas and Texas across to north Florida and up into eastern Virginia."

*Straight up racist that sucker was
Simple and plain*

"Fight the Power," Public Enemy

It's true that in the 1950s there was a common practice of using white artists to cover the songs of black artists, deliberately watering them down because, supposedly, that's what the white audience wanted. That isn't what Elvis did. Compare his version of Little Richard's "Tutti Frutti," which effortlessly gets to the raw sex at the heart of the song, to the vanilla version by Pat Boone, in

pers in the church yards near his home, followed by the rich thick sound of gospel singing welling up and out of the churches and filling the air."

"With his almost miraculous ear and passion for music," Williamson adds, "he drank in those sights and sounds. When he was twelve and thirteen, they became a part of him." It wasn't surprising that after the Presleys moved to Memphis, Elvis and several of his friends were frequent visitors to the East Trigg Avenue Baptist Church, less than a mile from Elvis's own church, where the legendary gospel songwriter

Reverend Herbert Brewster (“Surely God Is Able”) delivered sermons and Queen C. Anderson and the Brewsteraires were the featured soloists.

Elvis’s experiences were hardly unique. Williamson wrote in an earlier book, *Crucible of Race*, that “It seems fairly clear that whites learned much from blacks in language, literature, and religion, in music and manners, and in cuisine and conjuring. It’s probably not too much to say that a significant amount of the African heritage that survived in the slave South survived outside the black world in the white.” It survived and evolved and Elvis was one of many who was there to inherit the wind.

In 1985, the keynote speaker at Memphis State University’s annual Elvis Presley

memorial ceremony, held on the anniversary of his death, was Muhammad Ali. “We black people are kind of funny about music,” Ali said. “We don’t follow anything but what we call soul—Willie Dixon, Chuck Berry, Michael Jackson. But the only white boy I saw who could sing as good as any of ‘em was Elvis.”

Blues photographer Dick Waterman writes about a mid-1990s “Elvis and the Blues” seminar at the University of Mississippi where one panelist was Early Wright of Clarksdale, Mississippi, one of the first African-American radio DJs in the South. “Early went on to tell stories of how he met the young Elvis in the early 1950s at ‘colored dances’ in Clarksdale. He spoke of an Elvis who was quiet, sincere, respectful of his

elders and enthralled by the music he had come to hear.”

After playing a show in Houston one night, Elvis and his band headed for the Club El Dorado across town, where blues singer Lowell Fulson was headlining. According to Peter Guralnick, Fulson called them up on stage for a couple of numbers and Fulson’s opinion



The young Elvis and his parents, Gladys and Vernon, in 1938.

was: “Elvis sounded good and the house accepted it.”

But although Elvis Presley was a product of and even to a degree an agent of change, he could not escape the rigidly structured world he came from.

Eugene Talmadge, the governor of Georgia from 1933 to 1937, opposed FDR’s New Deal and refused to implement its programs. In a gathering of poor white workers, Talmadge justified preventing the distribution of free surplus food. Because it was a federal program, he told them, blacks would be getting free food right along with the whites and then, he warned, blacks would be “dancing with your daughters.” Talmadge was elected governor for two consecutive terms. Elvis was

born, two states over, in the year that Talmadge was re-elected.

As a very young child, Elvis would drive with his mother to visit his father in prison at Parchman Farm on Sundays. Their route went through the endless flat expanse of the Delta, where thousands of blacks worked as sharecroppers. Near Batesville, the Presleys would cross the Tallahatchie River, up the bend from where Emmett Till’s lifeless body would be dumped in the water tied to a cotton gin fan. Till was a Chicago teenager murdered in Mississippi for allegedly whistling at a white woman. The year was 1955, the same year Elvis signed his recording contract with RCA.

Elvis went to Humes High School in Memphis,

an all-white working class school. On April 9, 1953, Elvis performed as part of the school’s annual “Minstrel Show.” Such school assemblies were common throughout the South and tended to follow a standard script. Joel Williamson describes it: “A school band provided the music. More than a dozen students in blackface, seated onstage in a long row of chairs, sang and swayed. ‘End men’ on either side of the singers, also in blackface, shook tambourines, talked loudly back and forth, and made jokes, while ‘Mr. Interlocutor,’ a white-faced, elegantly suited white student seated in the middle of the group, acted as the master of ceremonies.”

It was no minstrel show three years later on the Fourth of July, when a

crowd of seven thousand people at Russwood Park in Memphis went crazy for Elvis at his biggest local concert yet. But earlier that day, only two miles away at Overton Shell, over three thousand people celebrated America's birthday by attending an anti-integration rally led by Mississippi Senator James Eastland.

As Elvis's career began to blossom, he remained at ground zero of the struggle over segregation. "During 1955," Williamson writes, "Elvis performed live on stage 234 times, but in only two cities outside the South...The 1955 performances were not only Southern, they were black belt Southern, areas where the proportion of blacks to whites ran high. Virtually all of Elvis's performances in 1955 occurred in states where slavery had been a central cultural institution less than a century before, where lynching by hanging and burning and race rioting had been rampant only fifty years before...where tension over the integration of the races in the public schools was then rising to white-hot intensity."

Further, "His performances became totally visual, and the girls responded to his every move as he sang—audibly, visibly, physically, and without inhibition." There was a backlash in the South against Elvis, much of it centered on the way he was encouraging teenage girls to cast aside the traditional Victorian modesty of Southern white womanhood. These girls might soon be going to school with young black males and local demagogues used the same racist appeals as Eugene Talmadge. A black belt Southerner himself, Elvis must have been aware of all this.

How did he process his experience with segregation? When Elvis went to East Trigg Avenue Baptist Church, he sat in a section reserved for whites. When he along with thousands of other whites went to the Memphis funeral for two members of the Blackwood Brothers Quartet, a white singing group from Choctaw County, Mississippi, blacks had to sit in the balcony. When

Elvis lived in Shake Rag, certain houses were set aside for whites. Everything was defined by race, and despite the grinding poverty of the Presley family and the fact of his father's imprisonment, it would be obvious to him that whites were in a superior position. So Elvis probably didn't give it much thought when he introduced his black backup singers the Sweet Inspirations to a Las Vegas audience in 1975 as "the young ladies who stayed out in the sun too long." He later compared Estelle Brown of the Inspirations to Stepin Fetchit.

The same man who made these racist comments closed his 1968 comeback TV special with a tribute to Martin Luther King, who was assassinated in Memphis just blocks from where Elvis had lived as a teenager. The song, "If I Can Dream," was written for Elvis by the show's vocal arranger Earl Brown, an African-American. Elvis delivered the song with intense passion.

*There must be lights burning
brighter somewhere*

*Got to be birds flying higher in a
sky more blue*

If I can dream of a better land

*Where all my brothers walk hand
in hand*

*Tell my why, oh why, oh why can't
my dream come true*

Chuck D of Public Enemy, who penned the lines "Elvis was a hero to most/But he never meant shit to me," told *The Guardian* last year: "I never personally had something against Elvis. But the American way of putting him up as the King and the great icon is disturbing. You can't ignore black history. Now they've trained people to ignore all other history—they come over with this homogenized crap. So, Elvis was just the fall guy in my lyrics for all of that."

Elvis remains a fall guy to many, an unavoidable fate since he has been an unwitting part of the whitewashing of American history that Chuck D describes. In some ways Elvis is also a hero, someone who helped create a voice for youth and a culture to use it in. He helped to establish a space for people to define themselves on their own terms.

Elvis didn't climb aboard that train consciously—his only plan was to make music no matter what. That he did. But he did not, as many maintain, invent rock & roll. Chuck D is certainly justly pissed off about all who are left out of the story when Elvis is given all the credit, but the truth is that no one person or even group of people invented it. Rock & roll came about as a by-product of gigantic social and historical forces. Literally countless people were involved in the musical evolution that emerged. If you subtract Elvis or any other individual from the mix, the essential result would be, if not exactly the same, instantly recognizable.

The "homogenized crap" that passes for history in the United States is more than fundamentally inaccurate. It teaches us that we are separate from each other, that we each belong to groups that have nothing in common. But if you dig deep enough into the history of Elvis Presley or into the history of Public Enemy, you will eventually wind up in the same place—a place more black than white, more South than North. The sonic boom unleashed from there has shattered barriers and mutated throughout the world, where it both gives and receives. And despite decades of corrosive corporate influence, the music remains a voice of hope for the Vernon Presleys of this world, for the slaves in bondage and for all us slaves held in check economically, spiritually, or politically. **CP**

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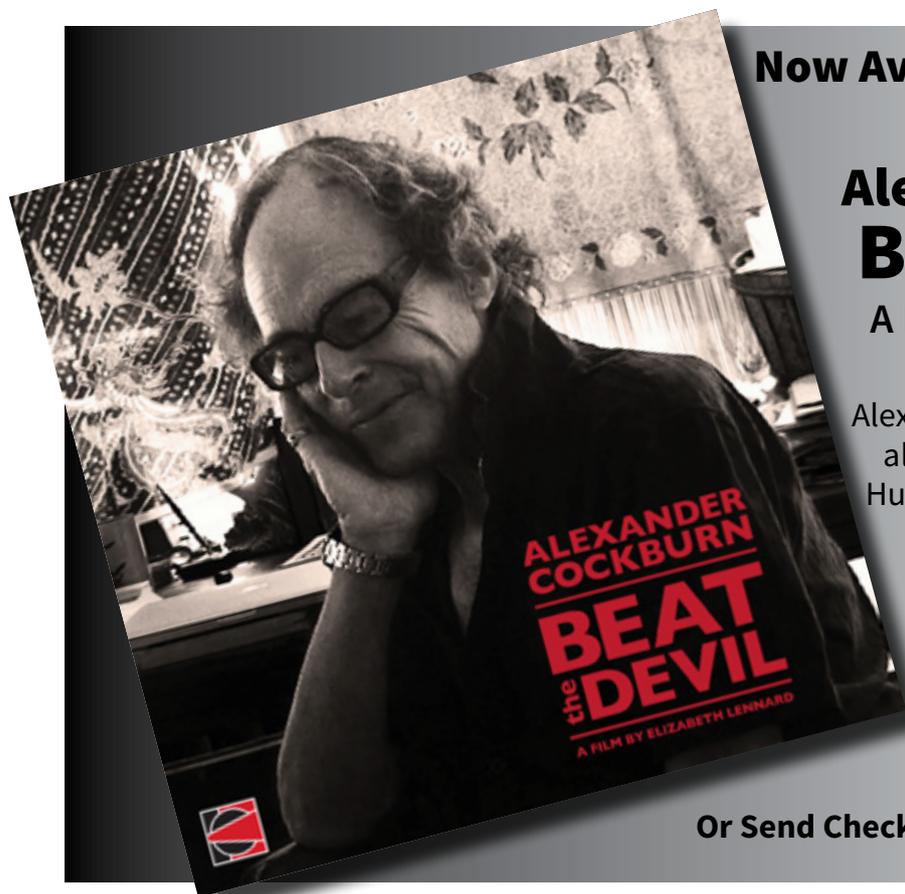
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