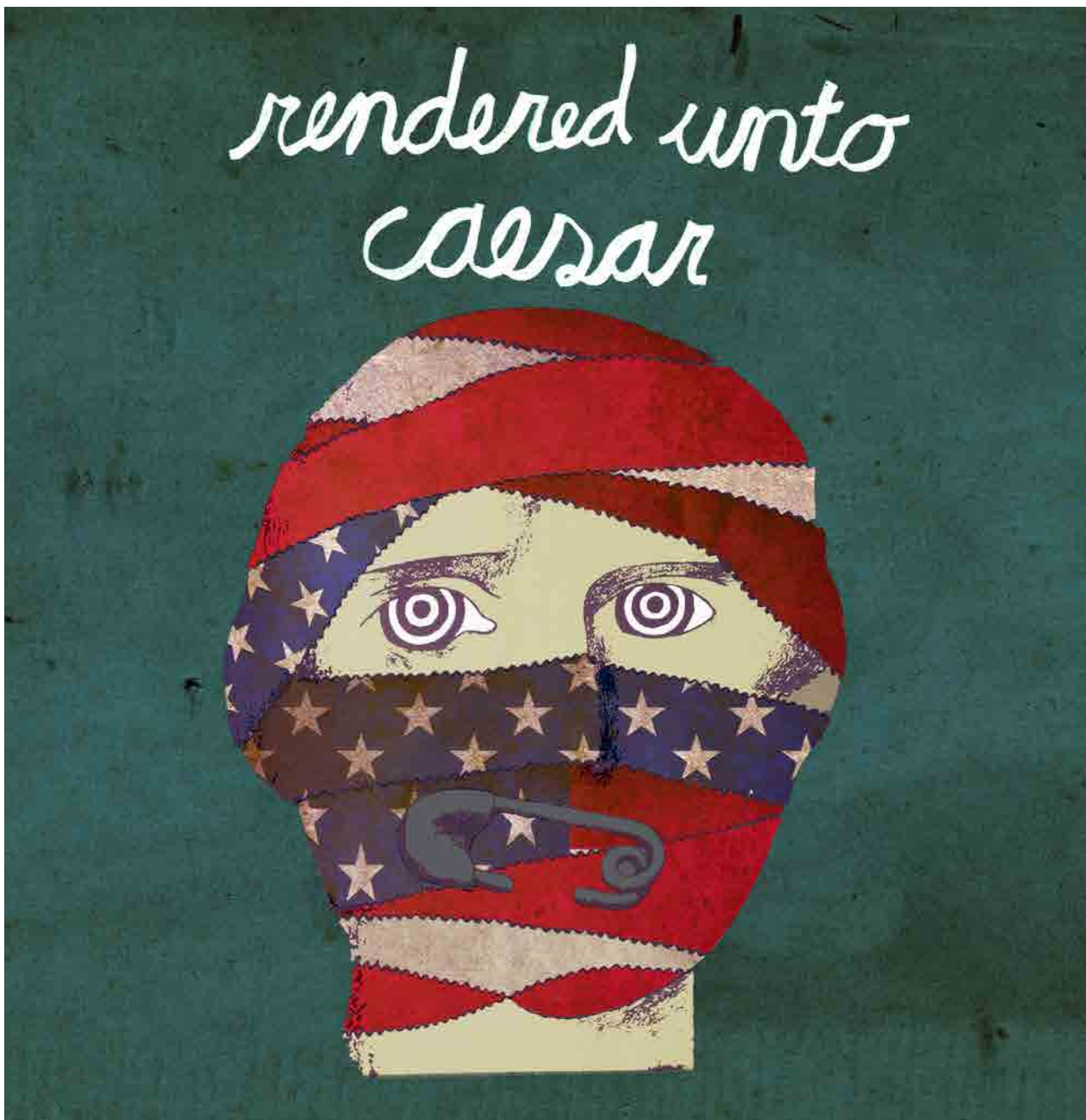


# CounterPunch

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A SOCIAL HISTORY OF WIRETAPS BY DAVID PRICE  
TWILIGHT OF THE POST WORLD WAR II ORDER BY PETER LEE  
MY HOLLYWOOD ADVENTURE WITH THE CIA BY JOHN ESKOW  
ACCIDENTAL RACISM? BY LEE BALLINGER



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# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Thanks for Vol 20 no.5 – the Ed Rampell piece is brilliant – so glad someone’s said it. Homeland, then Zero Dark Thirty (which I could not watch after 10 minutes) and Argo (and don’t forget The Hurt Locker!) – it was clearly propaganda – but so slick. I had to tell my daughter of the background of Argo before she could see the spin.

*Lois Achimovich  
Western Australia*

I just read your piece on Dershowitz, I think the difference between his gratuitous public support of torture and illegal, indefinite imprisonment, and Tsarnaev, is that Tsarnaev is an American, wherever his parents came from. I think Dershowitz was, maybe, lobbying for a (highly media visible) role on the defense team. His ego is much more powerful than his hatred of Palestinians, which is the root of his hatred for Muslim “terrorists”.

*Marcus Nestor*

Dear Jeffrey,  
Your article is dead on. I left the Democratic Party three-plus years ago and joined a prominent Third Party, and the local chapters here in our area. I was intent on joining with local activists, engaged (I hoped) in strategic activities and organizing to counter the destruction of the

two-party duopoly. I went to meetings with ideas and strategies, long thought-out, hoping to engage and go forth... I attended numerous events...

And what did I find? A shambles and a farce of a third-party operation, at several levels.

I was so dismayed and shocked at the state of things in this “Left” party. The key things that I saw and experienced were:  
· No state or local organizing presence or organizing game—no ground game—no local visibility, despite a national presence in the last election:  
· No effective organizing strategies or plans  
· No coherent messaging or communication tools or outreach  
· A smiling semi-hostility and a closed-loop phenomenon to anyone who tried to bring in new energy or ideas

And this:  
· People / individuals with the same negative psychological make-up as those in the Democratic Party: egotistical, controlling, manipulative, dissociative, dysfunctional, semi-pathological and so on  
· People who cannot communicate coherently, functionally or socially  
· People who need healing at many levels and who have never healed themselves.

As I say, it was a shock. My final shock, if I may say so.

I know realize that the pathology is across the board, including on the “Left.” Some writers / humanists / psychologists who are getting at this topic include Bruce Levine, Robert Jay Lipton, Joanna Macy, Vandana Shiva, Michael Meade, and others who write for CounterPunch. Plus the books of Eduardo Galeano and others ... Again, thank you for a good but chilling article. I see hope (and I’m taking that word back) in those who are actively and consciously healing themselves of the centuries of pathological history, inheritance and culture. They are out there.

*Kristina Filipovich  
Portland, Oregon*

Ed Rampell’s excellent piece on CIA and Hollywood collaboration was highly informative. He does not mention it, but I wonder about the voting process when a mediocre film like Argo secures a best picture award over an artistic achievement like Lincoln. If the agency is working the producers up front, are they also working the AMPAS voters behind the scenes? I can think of no other reason for the award. Argo was poorly acted, Affleck was a stiff. Green screens were so obvious that it felt like a Hollywood set. I laughed out loud at the contrived airport scene. I was shocked at rave reviews, and no less so when it got the best picture nod. I remember feeling

that same shocked surprise when Bush won in 2000. On a deeper note: American embassies house CIA stations, an open secret. CIA was deeply entangled in the Shah’s pre-1979 Iran. The people extracted seemed to know to meet and find shelter away from the embassy during a crisis. The Canadian embassy was probably a prearranged destination. The agency had to have been extracting its own people for security reasons. I cannot imagine any other reason for such drastic measures. Rescuing innocent civilians is not CIA’s charter.

*Mark Tokarski  
Morrison, CO*

We’ll be sending what we can for now at the start of next week. Thanks for standing up against the winds of psychotic faux conservatism.

*Larry Lack/Lee Ann Ward  
St. Andrews, NB Canada*

St. Clair’s ‘Game of Drones’ was outstanding. The Obama administration, more than any, is committed to revisionism – first it was the re-write of Vietnam last year; now it’s the turn of the ‘secret bombing’ that delivered the equivalent of five Hiroshimas to Cambodia.

*John Pilger  
London*

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## ROAMING CHARGES

# The CIA Came at Night

BY JEFFREY ST. CLAIR

They came for Jabour at night. He was ordered by the men to turn around and face the wall, while his hands were cuffed and his legs shackled. A blindfold was fastened to his head. He was led from his cell in an Islamabad jail to a waiting van.

Jabour was then driven to an airport and marched into a bathroom, where his blindfold was removed. He was confronted by a group of Americans, talking to each other in sign language.

A doctor approached him. He took Jabour's blood pressure and then injected him with a drug. Jabour began to feel dizzy. A black hood was placed over his head and he was led onto a military plane. His hands were cuffed behind his back. His legs were locked to a d-ring on the floor of the plane. "I knew it was the end of my life," Jabour said later.

This is the story of a rendition, just one account from the hundreds of men who have been snatched, tortured and dehumanized in the post-9/11 wars.

Marwan al-Jabour is a Palestinian who was born in Amman, Jordan. In 1994, he moved to Pakistan, where he pursued his education. In the spring of 2004, Jabour was detained by Pakistan's notorious ISI after having dinner with a friend and university professor in Lahore. He was taken to a detention facility where he was interrogated about his friend and about the location of Arab militants.

Through the night he was beaten, kicked and repeatedly shocked with an electric prod. Two days later, three American agents entered his cell and questioned him about his ties to al-Qaeda. He repeatedly denied having any relation to terrorists.

Jabour was detained in Pakistan for nearly a month, where he was tortured

regularly and savage threats were made against his wife and two children. He was bound for four consecutive days and refused even the right to urinate. He was never charged with a crime or allowed to see a lawyer. Then the Americans came again.

The men who put him on the plane that night worked for the Central Intelligence Agency. The prison they flew him to was a ghost site, a secret CIA interrogation facility, in some re-dacted corner of Afghanistan.

Two guards led Jabour to a dark cell, three feet wide and six feet long, where his clothes were cut off. One of his hands was cuffed to an iron ring in the wall. His feet were chained to a similar ring welded to the floor. Two video cameras were trained down on him. Loudspeakers blared heavy metal music, hour after hour, night after night. He was left standing in the cell naked.

The guards returned the next morning, shaved his head and his beard, unchained him and led him, still naked, to an interrogation room. Inside, there were ten people, including two women and a doctor. The doctor was filmed as he probed Jabour's naked body. He was then pushed into a chair and his legs and hands cuffed. A large, thickly muscled man called the "Marine" stood ominously behind him.

His interrogators warned Jabour to cooperate fully or he would be stuffed into the Dog Box. The man pointed to a small wooden box, three-feet by three-feet in size. Jabour was shown hundreds of photographs, quizzed about each. This went on day after day, week after week, month after month. He was fed rancid food from cans. Arbitrarily, his captors would chain him into contorted stress positions for hours at a time.

For more than two years, he followed the same routine. His legs were always shackled, his cell dark, his eyes blindfolded as he was moved from cell to interrogation room. Jabour's answers remained the same. He was not a terrorist. He didn't know the men in the photographs. He never associated with Al Qaeda.

Unknown to Jabour, in late June 2006, the Supreme Court ruled that detainees held by government as enemy combatants came under the protection of the Geneva Convention. Four weeks later, Jabour was told that he was going to be transferred again. Once more Jabour was stripped naked. This time he was forced to wear a diaper.

Again his naked body was filmed by his captors. Cotton balls were stuffed in his ears and taped over his eyes. A thick rubber band was strapped around his head. A mask was buckled around his face. "I felt like a mummy," Jabour later told Human Rights Watch investigators.

Before he was put on the plane, Jabour was pushed around by his captors and forced to sit in a chair next to another prisoner. He heard three gunshots and then was shoved into a small plane for a four-hour flight to Jordan, where he was ultimately turned over to the Israelis and released in Gaza. He had been held prisoner under orders of the CIA for more than two-and-a-half years.

Jabour has been free now for seven years. Still he waits for justice. When will it come? Who will deliver it?

We assess this sequence of horrors soberly. Our teeth gnash; our stomachs quiver. Our outrage intensifies with the revelation of each iniquity. For we are people of conscience and empathy. We feel shame and anger at the revolting crimes committed by our government, in our name. Because we express our disgust, we feel morally superior to the torturers.

But what have we done?

Ask Jabour. He knows. **CP**



## DIAMONDS AND RUST

# Life Against Death

JOANN WYPIJEWSKI

Buffalo is an apt place from which to launch a column by this name, a city hard as a precision cutting tool, and only now, thirty years into deindustrialization, sensing possibility in its unique position as a living museum to American decline. Reynier Banham called the city “a concrete Atlantis.”

It was a compliment, the title of an extended ode to grain elevators—invented, perfected and built in greater number here than any place on earth. These machines-disguised-as-buildings made Buffalo the world’s largest grain port, and their image in photographs and drawings so inspired Gropius and Le Corbusier that they pronounced their design theories and ignored the engineering. The Bauhaus would have some leaky roofs, but America was named the engine-house of modernism.

When the engine ran out of gas, most people didn’t look upon the concrete and rusted metal monoliths and think, Ah, our Pyramids! Our Parthenon! Ruin was too fresh. Banham was writing in 1986, a generation since the St. Lawrence Seaway made Buffalo’s port redundant.

Taverns that once were hiring halls for the grain scoopers now sheltered refugees from shuttering steel and auto parts plants. Local powers ran from the unfolding future by bulldozing what they could of the past, and the people, those who didn’t run, endured amid what remained.

I grew up here in the last go-go years for the working class, and was pondering the public and private landscapes of loss the other day when two photographs at an exhibition at the Burchfield Penney Art Center popped up like bumper stops, opening a way into what James Agee called the “cruel

radiance of what is.”

In the first picture, a woman swings a pillow at her lover’s camera. She is bare and in bed, aglow, Diane in London, 1974. Down the museum hall two gray silos and a spiral staircase of the derelict St. Mary’s Cement Elevator shoot up twelve feet. I entered this retrospective of Bruce Jackson’s photographs enthralled.

Then I was enraged, walking from rooms of photographs of convicts into a display of pictures of Jackson’s friends and associates, of parties—how can they have fun while the men in the next room are on Death Row!—and was immediately disgusted with myself, like Judas Iscariot tsking over a broken bottle of perfume while life gallops toward death. Jackson, a prof at the University of Buffalo, is an artistic polymorph, compulsive shooter, a swell guy, a CounterPuncher. I decided to come back another time, and to contemplate his title for a life’s work so far, “Being There.”

Rarely does an exhibition force you to bite down on the tough kernel of existence. Jackson’s prison work alone could have filled the museum space. So could some of his 12,000 pictures of Buffalo’s grain elevators.

The Widelux images of a bossman and work crew in the cotton fields of the Cummins Prison in Arkansas would still overwhelm; the hands jutting past the bars of Texas Death Row, “doing something the rest of the body couldn’t,” would still weigh heavy.

One might walk away feeling bad or indignant, but attention would be directed over there somewhere, to that oppressed population, or this ravaged city.

What’s jarring about Jackson’s collected work is that there is no “there”;

only a series of here’s that bleed into one another, or would but for walls and concertina wire, segregated neighborhoods and the false fronts or close-held griefs of people we encounter. “Being” is Bruce’s subject.

I returned to the show, ignored the curator’s irksome texts and let my eyes ricochet between images, the way seeing usually works in life—down halls, through doorways, from grain silos to free people having fun to prisoners, back to portraits from the free world (in prison usage) to a stone ruin in the Chihuahua desert where someone left behind purple panties and a syringe.

As free-worlders, we are all in some way at Jackson’s party, living while someone in lock-up is dying or waiting to. The Death Row prisoners he photographed in 1979 do not ask for our pity, but they presume our responsibility. That bulks larger today.

The condemned of the twenty-first century cannot dangle their arms between bars, or look at each other in hand mirrors, or create art from cigarette packs, or smoke, or chat in a dayroom, or watch soap operas together, or play volleyball in a wire cage. Contained behind solid doors, they are deprived of conversation, sensory experience, even the often-vicious solidarity of misery.

Their extremity does not argue for extending disaffection ourselves. Being at the party—really living, planting the flag for generosity versus deprivation, love versus indifference, soulfulness versus cynicism—is the resistant act in a system organized for cruelty and alienation. It’s what Jackson documented on Death Row, too, an image-echo of the great radical poet Nazim Hikmet.

“I mean you must take living so seriously,” Hikmet wrote from a Turkish prison,

...because although you fear death you don’t believe it,

because living, I mean, weighs heavier. **CP**



## EMPIRE BURLESQUE

# Shamming Into Syria

BY CHRIS FLOYD

When I saw the news on June 13 that Bill Clinton had joined with John McCain in blasting Obama's "inaction" on Syria and calling for direct U.S. military intervention in the conflict, I knew we would soon hear the other shoe dropping. And lo, just hours later, pat it came, with that reliable old house organ of the power structure, the New York Times, portentously reporting that "intelligence" had "confirmed" the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian government — the flashing "red line" that Obama had declared would be the trigger for more American intervention.

One day later, the New York Times reported that the White House will now supply the rebels with arms — yet another loose, uncontrollable flood of weaponry washing through the most volatile region on earth, guaranteeing more death, more ruin, more terrorism, more needless suffering not only on the Syrian killing grounds, but far beyond as well — exactly as we saw in the Libyan intervention. And no doubt the Sunni militants in Iraq — currently killing dozens of people weekly in the sectarian hell created by the American invasion — will love the U.S. ordnance they'll soon be getting from their al Qaeda allies in the forefront of the Syrian rebel campaign.

The move by Clinton, the progressive's beloved "Big Dawg," move was obviously part of a sham operation to "force" poor, peace-loving Obama into significantly ramping up American military involvement in Syria. (And the sight of this self-infatuated gasbag — with the blood of half a million sanction-murdered Iraqi children on his hands — now demanding more bloodshed for innocent people was truly sickening. Especially the "reasoning"

he gave for urging action, despite that fact that intervention is opposed by 85 percent of the American people: if Obama failed to help kill more people in Syria, Clinton said, he would end up "looking like a wuss." Yes, that really is the level of intellect that drives policy at the highest reaches of the American power structure. Yes, they really are juvenile neurotics with third-rate minds obsessed with their illusory "manhood," which can apparently be expressed only by the large-scale slaughter of human beings and military domination of the whole earth. Christ Jesus, boys — ain't you ever heard of Viagra? Bob Dole can get it for you wholesale. You really don't have to kill people just to get it up.)

For months, Obama has been playing this rope-a-dope game, stringing along both the rabid interventionists and the remaining "progressives" who still believe, against all evidence, in the president's good intentions. But now the time has come to up the ante. Why?

One reason — noted by the Times — is the fact that the Syrian rebels are clearly in danger of losing, despite the best efforts of close American allies like the woman-hating, head-chopping, extremism-abetting religious tyrants in Saudi Arabia to keep the bloodshed going. Indeed, as As'ad AbuKhalil points out, the Saudi and Qatari gunrunners and paymasters of the predominantly Sunni rebels in Syria are increasingly using the conflict to foment a genocidal fury against Shiites and related sects across the Middle East. As in Iraq, Western intervention is fuelling a spiral of uncontrollable sectarian violence at a level unseen in the region for centuries, AbuKhalil notes. And American warmongers love to see Muslims killing each other, especially if

it opens up new opportunities for war profiteering and oil deals, as in Libya and now in Syria. For example, just one day before the intelligence apparatus "confirmed" chemical weapon use by Syria, the administration eased export restrictions to "help facilitate oil sales from rebel-controlled areas," Reuters reports. One of life's little coincidences, I reckon.

Equally coincidental, no doubt, is the fact that this intelligence "finding" comes just as Team Obama is reeling from revelations of the Orwell-surpassing cyber-panopticon it has imposed on the entire populace. What better distraction from domestic skull-duggery than the ever-reliable foreign threat: "Look over yonder — WMDs!" Time to rally round the flag — and fill airtime and newsprint with endless blather and Pentagon propaganda about the noble humanitarian "surge" against Syria.

This is a momentous move — however juvenile and shallow and irredeemably stupid its perpetrators may be. Syria is not Iraq, Libya or Afghanistan, isolated regimes on the outskirts of the Middle East. It is in the very center of the powder keg. And it has powerful allies in Russia and Iran. Expanding the civil war there could draw those countries more directly into the conflict, as well as Israel, Iraq, Lebanon, even Turkey. The risk of a wider regional war — even a world war — is very real.

This is the reality we are now entering. It's not just blasts of point-scoring partisan rhetoric ricocheting around Capitol Hill, cable news and Twitter. There is a real world out there beyond the various screens that transfix us all, sealing us in an abstract, virtual space of light and pixels. Real people will die from this decision, and from the ludicrous, sinister games played by the stunted power-seekers on every side of the increasingly savage conflict. **CP**



## GRASPING AT STRAWS

# The Worst of Times for Workers

By MIKE WHITNEY

Wages matter. They matter because people deserve to be fairly compensated for their work. They matter because personal consumption drives the economy. They matter because they provide the means to distribute wealth more broadly which reduces inequality and strengthens democratic institutions.

When wages don't grow, personal consumption drops off and the economy limps along at half-speed. The problem can be papered over with fiscal stimulus or credit spending, but these are just short-term fixes. The best solution is to make sure that wages keep pace with productivity. That's the ticket. When workers share in productivity gains, then their income is recycled into the economy which increases output, creates jobs, and boosts GDP. It's a win-win situation for everyone.

Unfortunately, that's not the world we live in. We live in a world where hourly compensation and productivity move on two separate tracks, and those tracks are moving farther apart all the time.

Naturally, this hurts the economy since cash-strapped workers can't consume as much as big business produces. So aggregate demand drops-off, businesses hire fewer workers, output shrinks, and the economy goes into a long-term funk. But there is a remedy. The government can increase the budget deficits and create more jobs. When more people are working, the price of labor goes up, activity and revenues soar, and the economy clicks into high-gear.

Wages, as a share of gross domestic product GDP, are at a record low. In the booming '70's, wages accounted for more than 50 percent of GDP. Now

that figure has dwindled to less than 44 percent and is on track to drop even further. Of course, everyone knows why wages are flatlining. It's because all the money is flowing upwards to the bankers and fatcats. As UC Berkeley economics professor Emmanuel Saez discovered in his research on inequality, 65 percent of the country's income growth between 2002 to 2007 went to the top 1 percent of households. Surprisingly, it's only gotten worse since the recession ended.

According to the Pew Research Center the top 7 percent of US households increased their wealth by 28 percent from 2009 to 2011, while the bottom 93 percent saw their wealth slashed by 4 percent. The rich are getting richer while the poor are running as hard as they can to stay in place, yet still falling behind.

In the last two decades, corporations have made huge strides in productivity, but stingy CEOs have kept the gains for themselves leaving workers to scrape by on wages that (inflation adjusted) have dropped for three years straight. According to the Economic Policy Institute (EPI), worker productivity grew 80 percent from 1973 to 2011, while median hourly compensation, after inflation, grew by just one-eighth that amount. Windfall profits are being diverted into executive bonus packages and lavish vacation homes on the Cape, while working people are struggling just to pay the mortgage or buy a few groceries at the supermarket.

Last month's Productivity and Costs Report from the Bureau of Labor Statistics provides more evidence that things are rapidly getting worse for working people. According to the BLS, workers took a bigger hit in the first

quarter of 2013 than anytime on record. Hourly pay for nonfarm workers fell at an annual rate of 3.8 percent in the first three months of the year while factory workers saw their wages plunge by nearly 7 percent in the same period. Falling wages are a knock-on effect of high unemployment which is a direct result of government deficit reduction policy. The Obama administration's budget cutting fiasco (the sequester) is pushing wages below 2012-levels, when worker pay grew by a measly 1.9 percent y-o-y barely keeping pace with the rate of inflation. For working Americans, these are the worst of times.

A new report in the American Sociological Review titled "The Capitalist Machine: Computerization, Workers' Power, and the Decline in Labor's Share within U.S. Industries," explains why workers have done so poorly while corporate profits have soared to record highs. Assistant professor of sociology at the University of Haifa in Israel, Tali Kristal, found that labor's share of national income had dropped sharply due to the decline in unions. Here's the money-quote from the report:

"What we have is a large decrease in labor's share of income and a significant increase in capitalists' share in industries where unionization declined, and hardly any change in industries where unions never had much of a presence. This suggests that waning unionization, which led to the erosion of rank-and-file workers' bargaining power, was the main force behind the decline in labor's share of national income."

Middle class living standards are under attack in the US as never before. It will take a groundswell movement of motivated working people to stop the bleeding and redirect policy so people are fairly compensated for their labor. Absent stronger unions, the battle cannot be won. **CP**





## DAYDREAM NATION

# Ave, Angelina

BY KRISTIN KOLB

It was a typical May day in dreary Seattle, and I took shelter from the drizzle in *Christian Mysticism*, the works of the 12<sup>th</sup> Century Benedictine prioress, Hildegard von Bingen.

Hildegard was quite a woman. She wrote books, composed music, and practiced naturopathy. Among the hymns she wrote are versions of “Ave, Maria,” “Kyrie Eleison,” and the fascinating “Chants of 11,000 Virgins.” Her compositions are more gorgeous and meditative than the popular recants of the two former. Musicologists argue that her music reflects Sapphic sexuality, songs beatifying the female body as the realm of desire. “The truly holy person,” she wrote, “welcomes all that is earthly.”

I was consumed by subversive nuns when I received a message that *CounterPunch* was under attack! A fringe group of capital-S Socialists and some liberal lieges to *The Nation* were calling for heads due to some random article about Angelina Jolie, of all people. I observed the mud-slinging and read the damned thing. I was not impressed.

It was another Left circle jerk, this time revolving around a cheap piece about breast cancer and tittle-tattle regarding “tits.” I was reminded of my limited tolerance for the pussy-footing Left. “Identity Politics, when will it die, die, die,” I muttered, and assumed my position with the prioress.

Culture Wars redux. I’ve been pissed off at PC since at least 1992, when I was introduced to Third Wave Feminism, which reconstructs language as the de-sexualized discourse of “women with a y” and the incomprehensible quasi-vocabulary of Judith Butler. Uber-pop culture is revered. For example, the health of Jolie de Arc- who hasn’t said

or done much for women beyond reciting the script of “Tomb Raider” 1, 2, and 3 - is a tearful act of feminism.

As a licensed feminist, must I hate freedom of speech, and blush with rage when the titillating word “tits” appears in a sentence?

I thought Hooters-haunting men would be more upset about Madame Jolie’s mastectomy than a smattering of ideologues. I wanted to read more about Hildegard’s erotic “Chants of 11,000 Virgins,” but I took to the news cycle instead. While obsessing over Angelina, full of grace, here’s what you missed:

Both the *Yale Law Review* and the May 26 editorial in *The New York Times* addressed the epidemic of prison rape.

Yale published a piece by Elizabeth Reid, who was incarcerated here in Washington state. She detailed, graphically, how a guard raped her, and how the prison administration ignored her brave attempt to seek justice.

*The Times* was more oblique, but it’s still striking that they chose to call this horror out, let alone in the Sunday edition. “Despite the federal law, it is clear that not enough has been done to make sure all inmates are protected from rape.”

Here’s an issue over which I assumed Socialists would be debating organizing strategy and tactics: women in poverty. According to an article by economist Paul Buchheit, via Alternet, half of the United States is in poverty. Buchheit compiled data from the Census and IRS, among other sources, to reach his conclusion.

Meanwhile, a Pew survey found that 40 percent of American women are the primary financiers of the house, and 63 percent of those are single moms. Between the two articles, you do the

math.

I’m certainly not writing off the horrible disease of breast cancer, which cedes control of a woman’s body to the medical industry. In fact, two of my musical heroines, pioneering women of Punk and No Wave, have endured and perished from breast cancer. Where’s the Left’s outrage?

There’s Ari Up, the singer for The Slits, which was one of the first all-girl punk bands. And when I say “girl,” she was 14 when they started playing. The Slits smeared war paint on their faces for shows. When I saw them in 2006, Up did a cartwheel off the bouncer’s table.

As the UK tabloid, *Metro*, who interviewed her producer, published, “One day in 2009, Ari phoned and said: ‘I’ve got breast cancer.’ She never thought for a minute that she wasn’t going to beat it. She was the most fearless person I’ve ever met.” Up died a year later, at age 48.

Kim Gordon of Sonic Youth told Elle that she was diagnosed with breast cancer. According to the most recent edition of *The New Yorker*, Gordon had a lumpectomy. “Okay,” she said, “what else is going to happen to me?”

This struck me, as one of my powerhouse, take-no-prisoners icons showed vulnerability. I’m not the only one who thinks these women are devastating artists, and Angelina Jolie is not. But the Left chooses Jolie Jolie as the martyr.

As for icons, I’ve added Hildegard to that list. She embraced the sacredness of earthly, feminine sexuality, and she might chuckle at the gossip about that titillating four-letter word, “tits,” and the consecration of Jolie as emissary for the High Church of Socialist Feminism.

I bet she’d get along with D.H. Lawrence, that misogynist, who wrote: “Obscenity only comes when the mind fears and despises the body, and the body resists and fears the mind.” Kyrie Eleison. **CP**

# Memory's Half-life A Social History of Wiretaps

BY DAVID PRICE

With Edward Snowden's revelations of massive NSA electronic surveillance and metadata mining of domestic telephone and internet activities comes renewed scrutiny of American intelligence agencies intrusions into our lives. But with this news comes disturbing measures of Americans embracing governmental monitoring of our private electronic communications. A *Pew/Washington Post* poll conducted days after Snowden's disclosures showed 56% of respondents find the NSA PRISM program's collection of domestic metadata is "acceptable," and 45% believe that the government should "be able to monitor everyone's email to prevent possible terrorism." Media and pundits spin an unchallenged narrative of NSA surveillance as a harmless, necessary, and effective tool in network-centric borderless warfare, and we can expect increasing public support for ubiquitous surveillance, as Millennials are further socialized to accept invisible omnipresent intrusions as necessary, and nonthreatening, and normal.

This shift in Americans accepting and internalizing new levels of state surveillance marks a significant departure from Americans' century-long distrust of electronic surveillance. As an anthropologist, I know historical memory is fragile, and even deep-cultural values can shift and be managed by elites; yet our best defense against these memory-wipes begins with historical considerations of how we got here.

In the immediate aftermath of 9/11, the American public hastily abandoned a century of fairly consistent opposition to government wiretaps. Americans have forgotten that months before the 9/11 attacks, distrust of the FBI was at one of its highest historical levels, as the June 20, 2001 *USA Today* headline proclaimed "Poll: 4 in 10 American's Don't Trust FBI." The fear spread by the 9/11 attacks and Bush's terror wars brought uncertainties that helped cloud memories of intelligence agencies' historical abuses.

Decades of longitudinal survey data collected by the Justice Department records deeply-rooted American opposition to governmental wiretaps with disapproval levels fluctuating between 70-80% during the thirty years preceding 2001. But on December 12, 2001 the *New York Times* published a poll indicating that only 44% of respondents believed widespread governmental wiretaps "would violate American's rights." Post-9/11 fears flushed previous civil liberties concerns down the memory hole.

American views on wiretapping are complex, shifting, varied and at times contradictory. While American culture has long traditions of distrusting government, there are con-

current themes of patriotic zealousness. But even with such contradictions, it is clear that for the better part of a century most Americans opposed governmental wiretaps—even wiretaps of criminals. Americans had to be coerced into accepting these limits on privacy, freedom of association and expression, and the history of American wiretapping finds consistent efforts by governmental agencies to increase surveillance capabilities.

Electronic surveillance violates boundaries between individuals and the State. State eavesdropping and metadata-mining threatens notions of private and public spheres, it dislodges public understandings of freedom, and exposes the naked scaffolding of a Police State. It matters little whether these violations occur with the approval of courts or as blackbag operations: wiretaps and electronic-monitoring are primal violations not easily repaired by legal sanctions or oversight, and their damage is systemic and contagious.

## Early Wiretaps

In 1877 the world only had a single telephone line spanning any significant distance, with 778 phones operating on one line connecting Boston and Salem, Massachusetts. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, about one in a thousand Americans had telephones, but by the 1920s one in a hundred had phones, and at mid-century about one in three homes had them. Today, the US has more phones than people. There are over one-billion land-based telephone lines on earth, and an estimated six-billion cellphones.

Until the late-20<sup>th</sup> Century's disbursement of fiber-optic lines and cellphones, wiretaps required little technical equipment or assistance from the phone company. All one needed to tap a traditional copper-wire phone line was access to the phone-wire and alligator clips to attach to the red and green wires, a speaker or tape recorder.

Americans were outraged when they first learned of law enforcement's use of wiretaps in the early decades of the 20th century. During the First World War, wiretapping became so commonplace that Congress outlawed the practice despite the obvious threats to national security posed by spies and saboteurs. After the war, dozens of states enacted state law further limiting the electronic surveillance powers of local police.

During Prohibition, bootleggers used telephones to establish lines of communication between producers, distributors, and buyers. Local and federal police agencies ignored laws prohibiting wiretaps and routinely eavesdropped on phone calls. As local police increasingly used wiretaps, the federal government took actions to limit law enforcement agents' uses of wiretaps. With support from the public, in 1924, U.S. Attorney General Stone forbid the Justice Department from conducting wiretaps. The Treasury Department, and the Bureau of Investigation resented Stone's policy and both agencies continued to secretly employ wiretaps.

A 1926 Seattle rum-smuggling case in, which federal agents used wiretaps to prosecute former police lieutenant and bootlegger Roy Olmstead, established important legal rulings regarding the constitutionality of wiretaps. Though federal agents had illegally wiretapped Olmstead, the trial judge ruled that violations of state wiretapping law were immaterial, and Olmstead was found guilty of several Prohibition violations. In the dissent to the 1927 Ninth Circuit Court appeal, Judge Frank Rudkin found that despite criminals' threats to the greater public good, when law enforcement officials tapped phones they violated a basic social contract and threatened the foundations of privacy and freedom. Rudkin argued that, "no federal officer or federal agent has a right to take [a person's] message from the wires, in order that it may be used against him. Such a situation would be deplorable and intolerable, to say the least. . . if ills such as these must be borne, our forefathers failed in their desire to ordain and establish a government to secure the blessings of liberty to themselves and their posterity."

When *Olmstead* made its way before the U.S. Supreme Court in 1928, a brief filed by Seattle's Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Company's supported the right of illegal smugglers to not have their conversations monitored by the police, writing: "when the lines of 'two parties' are connected with the central office, they are intended to be devoted to their exclusive use, and in that sense to be turned over to the exclusive possession of the parties. A third person who taps the lines violates the property rights of both persons then using the telephone, and of the telephone company as well." It is difficult to imagine a contemporary ISP or telecommunication corporation advocating for the privacy rights of their customers. Instead, Facebook, MSN, Google and other corporations identified by Snowden feign ignorance.

Though the Supreme Court found against *Olmstead* in a five-to-four decision, Justice Brandeis' dissent warned: "Crime is contagious. If the Government becomes a law-breaker, it breeds contempt for law; it invites every man to become a law unto himself; it invites anarchy. To declare that in the administration of the criminal law the end justifies the means—to declare that the Government may commit crimes

in order to secure the conviction of a private criminal—would bring terrible retribution. Against that pernicious doctrine this Court should resolutely set its face."

Most Americans were outraged by the court's blatant disregard of Fourth and Fifth Amendment protections. Walter Murphy observed that across the country "the majority of editorials disapproved of what the court had done." Even conservative newspapers in Washington state criticized the ruling. In the thriving costal logging town of Hoquiam, the conservative *Washingtonian* wrote, "perhaps it will be neces-

sary for Congress to enact a law which will protect the secrecy of telephone messages by making them inadmissible in evidence in federal trials." These sentiments were not those of some left-leaning protector of civil liberties. As labor historian Aaron Goings notes, the *Washingtonian* "at times used its pages to advocate vigilante action against labor activists." Public outrage over the Supreme Court's ap-

proval of wiretaps bridged party lines. At the 1928 Republican Convention, Nicholas Murray Butler was jeered for his defense of the *Olmstead* decision. There was something innately un-American about wiretapping, even wiretapping *bad guys*.

Because of broad public disapproval of wiretaps, the FBI adopted a fake public posture regarding electronic surveillance. The FBI's 1928 operations manual maintained that wiretapping was not allowed and that it was "improper, illegal. . . and unethical." While the FBI conducted secret wiretaps, Hoover lied to Congress, claiming agents caught wiretapping would be fired. Hoover consistently exploited high publicity crimes and public fears to push for greater wiretapping powers. After the 1932 Lindberg baby kidnapping, Hoover expanded the FBI's reach to include a new class of crimes, and Hoover argued for increased surveillance powers.

The 1934 Communications Act federally criminalized the tapping of telephones, and in 1939 *Nardone v. the US*, the Supreme Court upheld Congress's ability to federally outlaw the use of wiretaps. Yet the FBI and other law enforcement agencies continued illegal wiretap operations, gathering information not presented in court. But *Nardone* stopped short



Illustration by Ian MacEwan.

of repairing the damage inflicted by the *Olmstead* decision, and wiretaps gained new life as the Second World War years strengthened America's intelligence agencies while weakening civil liberties.

### Feeding Hot & Cold War Fears

American attitudes towards wiretapping significantly shifted during the 1940s, as the war and changes in the class distribution of telephones helped shift judicial acceptance of wiretaps. In 1940 Hoover attempted to secure new wiretapping powers from Congress but was defeated by FCC Chairman James Fly. But President Roosevelt issued a secret executive order authorizing widespread Justice Department wiretaps of "subversives" and suspected spies. Hoover used these vague new powers to investigate not just Nazis but anyone he thought subversive. Hoover's assistant, William Sullivan, later recalled that during the war, the FBI routinely conducted warrantless wiretaps, "with the country's future at stake, getting approval from Washington seemed like an unnecessary legal technicality. Years later, the FBI was still listening in on other people's conversations without the authorization of the attorney general." The social history of wiretaps is a history of mission creep, where FBI agents initially hunting for wartime Nazi spies soon monitored progressive activists fighting racial segregation.

During the 1940s, the telephone became an increasingly ubiquitous feature of American households—not merely the communication instrument of the Elites with whom the Judicial Class consorted and protected. As the phone became a communication conduit not primarily for the rich, but also for the poor, the judiciary began to reconsider past wiretap opposition.

The FBI used the fears of the McCarthy period to expand its use of illegal wiretaps: targeting not only suspected communists, but a wide range of progressives struggling for civil rights, union leaders, social workers, and progressive religious groups. But even during the McCarthy Period, the courts did not sanction illegal FBI wiretapping. When the FBI disclosed it had illegally wiretapped conversations between accused Soviet agent Judith Coplon and her lawyer, the appeals court overturned her conviction. Local police departments expanded wiretapping operations in the 1950s. New York police routinely wiretapped public phone booths during the early 1950s, and launched an estimated 3,500 wiretaps in 1953-54. Police departments continued to conduct unauthorized wiretaps during the 1960s, and even though *Benanti v. US* clarified that wiretaps were criminal violations of Section 605 of the Communications Act, federal and local law enforcement authorities routinely tapped phones with impunity. But they did so with the disapproval of the public and courts.

In 1967's *Katz v. US*, the Supreme Court again ruled that the Fourth Amendment protections against unreasonable

searches extended to telephone conversations. The following year Congress added a provision in Title III of the 1968 Omnibus Crime Bill circumventing the *Katz* decision by identifying specific crimes (kidnapping, organized crime, etc.) meriting wiretaps. In intervening years the list of crimes permitting wiretaps grew with bipartisan support.

The years following Hoover's 1972 death brought successive scandalous revelations about the FBI and CIA's illegal intrusions into Americans' private lives. The Church and Pike Committee investigations revealed extensive surveillance campaigns directed at Americans engaging in lawful political activities. The American public was outraged at the extent of the CIA and FBI's illegal activities, but an initial wave of shock gave way to complacency, and Congress abandoned meaningful oversight of domestic and foreign intelligence agencies. With time, many Americans learned to forget these documented instances of CIA and FBI prurient surveillance, harassment, assassination and defamation programs—by 2001, few Americans recalled the FBI and CIA's abuses that led to the restrictions on domestic intelligence activities that were removed by the Patriot Act.

In 1978, former CIA telecommunications engineer, David Watters, testified before the Senate Intelligence Subcommittee about NSA monitoring and taping thousands of domestic and international phone conversations. These revelations brought public disapproval and empty promises of congressional oversight. With ECHELON and Carnivore the NSA and FBI's capacities for telecommunications surveillance capacities grew unchecked.

One trophy in the intelligence community's campaigns for America's acceptance of circum-constitutional procedures was the 1978 establishment of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA), establishing a secret judicial system charged with authorizing wiretaps and other means of electronic surveillance relating to issues of "National Security." The FISA Courts conduct their work in total secrecy. A 2002 court ruling removed requirements of establishing probable cause before allowing FISA authorized electronic surveillance, and between 1978 and 2004 the FISA's kangaroo court rejected 5 of 18,761 warrant requests, and last year authorized every received request.

Though the internet was in its infancy, used primarily by military personnel and on university campuses, until the passage of the 1986 Electronic Communications Privacy Act it was legal to intercept email messages traveling through phone lines. The Act required that all electronic communications have the same legal protections as phone communications—though conversations made on cordless phones were not protected.

Many Americans opposed the 1994 Digital Telephony Act, which required all fiber-optic based switches be equipped to facilitate court approved wiretaps. The ACLU and Electronic Privacy Information Center organized widespread opposition

to the bill, and across the country letters to editors and editorials criticized the bill's obtrusive features. There was a stark contrast between the communication industry's embrace of this bill and the industry's stance in the 1927 *Olmstead* appeal in which the opposed *all* efforts by law enforcement to tap phone lines.

With little public notice the Reagan, Bush and Clinton administrations each increased the use of federal wiretaps, and the conservative federal judiciary appointed during the 1980s brought little judicial opposition to wiretaps. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s there was a steady increase in wiretaps undertaken by federal authorities, but given the secrecy surrounding FISA approved wiretaps, these numbers only tell a small part of the story. According to investigative journalist and longtime NSA chronicler, James Bamford, offshore surveillance networks such as ECHELON skirted pre-Patriot Act limitations on domestic surveillance by using third-party countries to monitor US citizens' phones and email.

During the 1980s, corporations increasingly collected data on Americans in ways that post-Watergate governmental agencies were prohibited to do. After initial resistance, in a brief period of time, American public attitudes shifted from resistance to acceptance. News reports in the late 1980s that the Lotus 123 Corporation would be compiling and publishing a set of CD-ROM platters containing basic information on the names and addresses of most Americans show public outrage over the prospect of such centralized record keeping, but decades later the internet makes such intrusions invisible, voluntary, and inevitable, in ways documenting our national numbing and processes socializing us to accept our loss of privacy expectations.

Revelations during the late 1990s disclosed that the NSA monitored "international" telephone traffic, using computers to scan for keywords. New encryption technologies for personal computers and other communication technologies led Congress and Clinton to limit communication encryption schemes that would interfere with governmental electronic eavesdropping. Truly private telephonic or electronic communications threatened intelligence agencies' abilities to eavesdrop, and limits were placed on the distribution of RSA encryption, PGP freeware, the Clipper Chip and other programs were required to include implanted backdoors and escrowed keys for law enforcement personnel.

In the early and mid-1990s the American public's protections from electronic surveillance were further eroded by a series of court cases involving questions of whether workplace email had the same privacy protections as a letter or a phone call. Many of the judges establishing this case law were internet-illiterate and needed even the most basic features of email explained to them because they had never used email. Judges made important decisions in realms of social life of which they had no first-hand knowledge and they did not seem to understand arguments that they were abolish-

ing the same expectations of privacy one had when using the telephone or mail in the workplace.

Had the judiciary in the early 1990s considered the nature of email communications as being little more than an electronic envelope, America might be a very different country today. Such connections between expectations of postal and telephonic privacy were made in Brandeis' *Olmstead* dissent, anchoring his reasoning for protecting the privacy of telephonic communications, arguing "there is, in essence, no difference between the sealed letter and the private telephone message." But the post 9/11-world finds little hope that such reasoning will soon protect our emails.

The Patriot Act removed post-Church Committee layers of judicial oversight for federal wiretaps and pen/trap orders (recording numbers dialed); it revoked restrictions prohibiting U.S. intelligence agencies from spying on American citizens; enacted roving wiretaps that follow the subjects of investigation; and allowed for heavy online monitoring of email and web-traffic. With the creation of the Department of Homeland Security, the State gained a centralized agency to coordinate domestic intelligence operations ways only dreamed of by J. Edgar Hoover. The Patriot Act extended the powers and reach of the FBI and CIA not in a new direction, but along the same continuum long-sought by Hoover and others without past legal hindrances or public opposition. Bush overreached with Poindexter's failed Total Information Awareness program, as public outcry rose opposing a federal agency empowered to mine metadata, but where Bush failed, Snowden's disclosures inform us, Obama prevails.

But one of the most important shifts is that after a century of stiff opposition the American public is learning to surrender their rights to electronic privacy. Fewer and fewer Americans remember the long historical resistance to empowering our secret political police with such unchecked abilities and resources.

## Memory as Defense

With little public debate, the Patriot Act rapidly removed judicial controls limiting America's domestic surveillance and persecutions. The restoration of old, and the granting of new, surveillance powers brings new levels of oppressive surveillance for all Americans, but we know that historically such powers are used to monitor those challenging American domestic or foreign policies. Perpetuated fears of terror encourage Americans to forget a past they barely knew, and vague assurances that the rights of the "innocent" will be protected brush aside memories of well documented historical violations of privacy and civil liberties as if these were not structured outcomes.

As cultural beings we are all susceptible to the numbing and routinizing impacts of recurrent events. Time normalizes what were once obvious atrocities. Sustaining shock is always difficult, outrage's half-life is short and the toll of cog-

nitive dissonance weighs heavy. With time the outrageous and offensive can be seen as the “unfortunately necessary,” the potency of shock is short-lived as once current events become historicized.

The key to understanding the opinion shifts supporting the rise of domestic metadata mining programs and wiretaps is that these developments are less something new than they are part of a long parade of legitimization validating the American intelligence agencies’ campaign to erode constitutional protections against rampant wiretaps. The Patriot Act dismantled the firewall separating domestic criminal investigations from espionage investigations and empowered Homeland Security, FBI and NSA to oversee roving wiretap and surveillance operations without public oversight.

The Snowden leaks confirm what many scholars of American intelligence agencies have long suspected: the Bush and Obama administrations have given the NSA unprecedented surveillance authority to monitor domestic electronic communications. The public’s acceptance of post-9/11 panoptical-surveillance necessitates learning to forget past abuses. While fear nurtures forgetfulness, fear alone is not enough: fear needs to be managed. Government- and media-framed analysis help keep much of the nation from remembering a past scarred with constitutional abuses. Television enforced amnesia coaxes the nation to coalesce with the needs of the intelligence-industrial complex, and each new round of Terror Alert Twister shifts fears from Blue to Red to Yellow as we are socialized to surrender rights with greater ease. David Altheide describes these processes of managed fear as ones where we become “accustomed to giving up civil liberties to surveillance and enforcement efforts by formal agents of social control.”

Sociologist Sigmund Diamond spent decades chronicling the intrusions of intelligence agencies into American academic life and the resulting threats to academic freedom. For Diamond the collective memory loss of past governmental abuses was an important weapon of the present. Diamond argued that, “since historical memory is one of the weapons against abuse and power, there is no question why those who have power create a ‘desert of organized forgetting.’ But why should those who have been the victims sometimes act as if they, too, had forgotten?” America’s historical memory is the crucial battleground in the struggle to regain lost privacy and civil liberties, and those who would engage in this struggle must combat the “desert of organized forgetting” in ways that reawaken America’s battered public memories. But in a nation where education reform relegates the teaching of history as less important than teaching to standardized tests, these historical gaps loom large, and the recapturing of lost historical territory remains a daunting task.

In the novel, *Underworld*, Don DeLillo wondered whether, “the state had taken on the paranoia of the individual or was it the other way around;” in our world we know the source.

America is now so lost in surveillance that our only choice is between memory-loss and embracing paranoia. **CP**

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## Japanese Historical Revisionism Twilight of the Post World War II Order

BY PETER LEE

For the last few weeks, the world has been distracted by cyberdrama—the culmination, at the Sunnylands Xi Jinping-Obama summit, of the laborious 16-month US campaign to make alleged Chinese cybermalfeasance a driving narrative in US-China relations...which was pre-empted by cyberfarce—the unexpected confirmation through a series of leaks to the *Guardian* and the *Washington Post* that the NSA and the FBI have penetrated the cell phones, e-mails, personal records, and Facebook pages of American citizens in a massive effort that the Chinese can only dream of emulating.

As the world tilts at cybercastles, the post-World War II order is crumbling. The world order represented by the structure of the UN Security Council—the victors of World War II, the United States, England, France, Russia (succeeding the Soviet Union), and the People’s Republic of China (succeeding the Republic of China) is increasingly anachronistic and headed for obsolescence.

In Asia, Japan is eager, even desperate to shed the onus of defeat and instead claim a leading role orchestrating a new security and economic alliance of Asian democracies facing up to the People’s Republic of China.

The frictions engendered by “rising China” assertiveness versus the similarly destabilizing “re-rising Japan” assertiveness have been simplistically described as “nationalism”. The truth, however, is more complex.

Call it “national historical revisionism” versus “national historical status-quo-ism”, with different nations lining up, sometimes unexpectedly, on different sides of the equation.

The “status quo” narrative supported by the United States and many Asian countries, characterizes Japanese wartime activity as aggression, Japan’s neighbors as victims deserving reparations, and Japan itself condemned by its past crimes to a sort of geopolitical purgatory that precludes overseas military operations.

This attitude is enshrined in the “Peace” constitution, imposed by Douglas MacArthur and the Occupation, which restricts Japanese military forces to operations within Japan’s borders. Therefore, the large and sophisticated Japanese military establishment is officially known as the “Japan Self-



Yasukuni Shrine. Photo: Japan Times

Defense Force”.

Beyond restrictions on foreign adventures, the constitution also neuters Japanese foreign policy. Japan cannot leverage its economic clout with overt security alliances, mutual assistance treaties, military assistance agreements, foreign port calls, overseas bases, arms sales, etc.

To date the United States has virtually monopolized the military/security role in East Asia. It is a role that America, with its regional economic clout shrinking, is not interested in relinquishing.

Now the “status quo” is being upset.

Following landslide victories in 2012 national elections, Japan is ruled by the Liberal Democratic Party, or LDP, under Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, whose historical revisionism portends a new military and security posture in Asia and perhaps even revision of the “Peace” constitution.

Even within the scope of the current constitution, especially when generously interpreted by the current administration, Japan has ample room to expand its military footprint.

The Abe cabinet has decided that Japanese ground forces could be dispatched overseas “to assist in the evacuation of Japanese nationals” from danger zones. Defense Minister Itsunori Onodera asserted Japan’s legal right to engage in pre-emptive strike to forestall an imminent attack, while stating that Japan had not developed that capability “as yet”. Abe’s government also touted the concept of “collective self-defense”, which states that the Japanese self-defense forces could come to the defense of an ally, i.e. fight a war outside Japan’s borders as long as it was “defending an ally”, for instance, by shooting down a North Korean missile in international airspace headed for the United States.

In the context of its competition with China, Japan has promised aid to the Philippines the form of maritime patrol boats to assist it in its territorial disputes with the PRC, promoted security consultations with ASEAN in general and Vietnam in particular, and, for the first time, proposed the overseas sale of military equipment, the US-2 amphibious aircraft, to cement its alliance with India, albeit under the flag of dual use.

The LDP has been carefully testing the public opinion waters (currently less than welcoming) for a push to amend the constitution to overtly remove its military restraints.

This is a decision with sizable consequences for the balance of power in Asia.

However, the idea that Japan, as a peaceful Asian democracy, should have its return to full nationhood mediated in consultations with its previously victimized neighbors either in the name of equity or in the interests of regional stability is completely at odds with the nationalistic spirit that is driving revision in the first place. Prime Minister Abe has taken pains to assert that Japan’s revision of the Peace constitution is not the business of any other countries

The new government has become less circumspect in visiting the Yasukuni Shrine, an independent religious establishment (though leadership of the lay society which supports it is generally regarded as a sinecure for LDP hawks) commemorating the over 2.4 million Japanese who died “in the service of the Empire”.

Because Yasukuni honors 1068 convicted war criminals, including 14 “Class A” war criminals who “died as a result of war crime tribunals which have been ratified by the San Francisco Peace Treaty” i.e. Japanese political or military

leaders who were either executed or died during incarceration at the hands of the Occupation after the war, it is considered to be a symbol of Japan's unrepentant nationalism.

In an interesting/awkward conundrum for the LDP's ostentatious emperor worship (one proposed constitutional revision will restore the Emperor to his prewar position of actual as opposed to symbolic head of state), Emperor Hirohito ceased his visits to the shrine in disgust after the Class A criminals were enshrined, and no emperor has visited since.

Japanese prime ministers have eschewed personal visits to the shrine in recent years to forestall the outcry from China and South Korea, and this year Mr. Abe cautiously confined himself to sending an offering instead of appearing in person.

Lower level LDP politicians, however, are another matter. Recently, LDP's policy director, Sanae Takeichi, organized a mass visit of over 100 LDP lawmakers to the Yasukuni Shrine.

Her remarks as recorded by Japanese media, provide a good idea of revisionist nationalist sentiments and the awkward circumlocutions needed to express them:

"Takaichi acknowledged that there was "no doubt that (Japan) hurt the ethnic pride of people in colonised countries and caused them tremendous sufferings," but also questioned whether a 1995 landmark apology issued by then Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama was right in referring to a "mistaken national policy." The policy chief said that she doesn't believe it would have been best at the time for Japan to not stand up against western powers in order to prevent becoming yet another colony. The cabinet of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe officially stated last week that it would not be revising any of Japan's formal apologies for World War II atrocities, but Takaichi mentioned without elaborating that Abe may hold different personal views from past government that accepted judgements of the post-war Tokyo Trials."

In the United States and Great Britain, inculcated with the narrative of Japanese World War II criminality symbolized by Pearl Harbor, the Bataan Death March, and the horrors of Japanese prison camps—and aware of the intense outrage it elicits in China and South Korea—Japanese historical revisionism looks like little more than perverse, self-defeating quixotism.

When Japanese nationalists attempt to deny the horrors inflicted on Korea by Japan's fifty-year colonization of the Korean peninsula—a brutal effort to extinguish Korean independence, culture, and even language in order to incorporate the territory into the Japanese polity—their efforts are well-nigh indefensible.

One of the ugliest exercises is the effort to remove the onus from Japan on the compelled recruitment of 200,000 Korean women into Japanese military brothels in World War II—and slow-walk compensation talks as the elderly victims die off. Ultra-nationalist lawmakers have variously declared that the recruitment didn't occur, or was voluntary, and/or that

Korean families bear the responsibility (and shame) for delivering their women to prostitution.

As *Japan Times* reported on June 8, 2013:

"A Lower House lawmaker of Nippon Ishin no Kai (Japan Restoration Party) has questioned whether Koreans were such 'cowards' as to allow girls and women in their neighborhoods to be forcibly recruited as sex slaves in Japan's wartime military brothels.

Nariaki Nakayama, well known for his ultraconservative views, made the remark at an assembly of Nippon Ishin lawmakers Friday to emphasize his belief that "comfort women," as they are known in Japan, were not "forced" to work in the brothels."

However, Japanese historical revisionism is not the universal political liability that a Westerner, Chinese, or Korean might imagine or hope it would be.

Taiwan still has fond memories of the relatively benign Japanese occupation from 1895 to 1945. The first elected president of the ROC, Lee Tenghui, an indigenous Taiwanese, is an ardent Nipponophile who served in the Imperial Japanese Army in World War II and graduated from Kyoto Imperial University. His brother died in the service of the Japanese navy and is enshrined at Yasukuni (Lee visited Yasukuni in 2007, after he left office). Lee, still an important force in Taiwan's pro-independence political movement, is close to Japanese ultranationalist Shintaro Ishihara and frequently assures Taiwanese audiences that Japan will support Taiwan if it declares independence.

For many key South Asian nations the ascendancy of the Japanese revisionists returns to center stage a welcome narrative—not of benevolent Japanese colonization as in Taiwan, but of Japanese-led decolonization during World War II, which drove the British, French, and Dutch out of Asia and helped create the modern Asian states that emerged from the shadow of the European imperialism.

Perhaps the most remarkable endorsement of decolonization came from Thailand, which, though subjected to an influx of Japanese troops on December 8, 1941, promptly concluded an alliance, bore few if any postwar grudges, and has always uneasily straddled the "first victim/first ally" divide for Japan as Austria does for Germany.

Japanese nationalists gleefully pass around a 1955 statement by Kukrit Pramoj, a cosmopolitan nobleman who acted opposite Marlon Brando in *The Ugly American* and later became Prime Minister of Thailand.

On the occasion of a visit by the onetime commander of Japanese occupation forces in Thailand, Akito Nakamura (Nakamura was, admittedly, by most accounts an impeccable gentleman who implemented an occupation of Thailand which was, by Japanese standards, exemplary and humane), Pramoj wrote:

"Thanks to Japan, all Asian nations have gained independence...Whom should we thank today that peoples of



Southeast Asia can speak to the United States and England as equals? It is due to our mother, Japan, who sacrificed herself for the benefit of all.”

In Burma, Aung San Suu Kyi’s father was trained and financed by the Japanese government and his troops fought as irregulars in cooperation with the Japanese army to expel the British. Aung San subsequently served in the Japanese backed Burma government and was presented with the Order of the Rising Sun by Emperor Hirohito in Tokyo. He subsequently switched sides to fight the Japanese in the last months of the war in pursuit of his final goal of Burmese independence, but was excoriated as a “traitor rebel leader” by Churchill.

Japan has sustained a special relationship with independent Burma—at least with the politically dominant Burmese majority, whose hardships during the Japanese occupation were moderated by the local collaborationist regime. Approximately 180,000 Japanese soldiers died in the last year of the war in a disastrous campaign against the British, and Japanese veterans groups have journeyed to Burma continuously to honor their dead comrades.

Even during the worst years of the junta, Japan suspended development aid but never implemented sanctions against the regime. In 2013, taking advantage of the US opening to Burma, Prime Minister Abe’s government extended a \$500 million loan to Burma, and cancelled over \$4 billion in debt.

In India, the case of Radhabinod Pal illustrates the resonance of the Japanese decolonization narrative and historical revisionism, both across the continent and across the decades.

Radhabinod Pal was an Indian jurist on the Japan war crimes tribunal in 1946. Pal was enamored of the anti-colonial rhetoric that accompanied the Japanese “advance” into SE Asia. He believed the United States had provoked Japan into war (the Japanese response was therefore not “aggressive”), was concerned about Allied wartime atrocities, and declined to endorse the “triumph of civilization” narrative of Japan’s defeat or the creation of “Class A” war criminal category that the Occupation used to prosecute the Japanese military and civilian leadership. While acknowledging the commission of atrocities in the field, Pal voted for acquittal of the “Class A” defendants and prepared a 1235-page dissenting opinion—suppressed by the Occupation until 1952-- stating that the trial was a “victor’s justice” travesty.

After his dissent was published, Pal, unsurprisingly, became a hero to Japanese nationalists, and validation of the idea that historical revisionism was not simply a Japanese effort in self-serving denialism.

In 1966, the Emperor of Japan conferred upon Pal—who stated his lifelong admiration of Japan as the one Asian country that stood up to the West-- the First Class of the Order of the Sacred Treasure.

Prime Minister Abe made a pilgrimage to Kolkata in 2007

to meet with Pal’s son and receive two pictures of Pal with Abe’s grandfather, ex-Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi, who was detained after the war as a suspected Class A criminal but never indicted or tried.

BritPal was enshrined at Yasukuni, which gives the lie to the claim that it is simply a war dead memorial and not a revisionist shrine. The photo illustrating Pal’s entry in Wikipedia is his Yasukuni stele.

Indian PM Manmohan Singh, is a devout Nipponophile (and an emerging pillar of Japan’s anti-PRC coalition), eulogized Pal as a prophet of Indo-Nipponese solidarity in his 2006 address to the Japanese Diet:

“The principled judgment of Justice Radhabinod Pal after the War is remembered even today in Japan. Ladies and Gentlemen, these events reflect the depth of our friendship and the fact that we have stood by each other at critical moments in our history.”

India itself is another country in which nationalist revisionists seek to replace a pacifist narrative of the post World War II nationhood with a more martial, Japan-centric decolonization legend.

Pal was an admirer of the Indian National Army-- composed of deserters from the Indian Army in British Malaysia-- which fought with the Japanese against the British in Burma under the leadership of Subhas Chandra Bose in an effort to liberate India from British rule.

When the British attempted to try the leaders of the INA for treason after the war, the combination of outrage in the Indian military and popular revulsion against the British exercise of justice was a crucial factor in Great Britain granting Indian independence.

Indian nationalists circulate a letter from another jurist, the acting governor of West Bengal, one Chief Justice P.B. Chakrabarty, who reported that Clement Atlee told him the key factor in the British departure was the erosion of loyalty of the Indian armed forces “as a result of the military activities of Bose” and dismissed Gandhi’s influence on the British decision as “minimal”.

The emerging revisionist strain concerning World War II and decolonization is also reflected in India and Japan’s joint campaign to reform the permanent membership of the UN Security Council, seeking to supersede the World War II victors’ roundtable with a new, postwar structure reflecting the current economic and military clout of the world’s nations.

This combination of Japanese historical revisionism, a shift of emphasis from Japanese aggression to Asian decolonization, and the downplaying of the US role as the ringmaster of Good in the Good vs. Evil World War II showdown is not particularly welcome to the United States, which is completely invested in the Greatest Generation narrative.

Given the indispensability of Japan to the US pivot strategy, the Obama administration has been remarkably cool to

Shinzo Abe.

US ambivalence probably has to do with the fact that while Japan cleaves to the pivot, Abe exploits it to bolster Japan's pursuit of an increasingly independent and unilateral foreign policy.

Examining Abe's peripatetic diplomacy during the first three months of his administration (trips to Vietnam, Thailand, Indonesia, Mongolia, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, UAE, Turkey, and Myanmar in addition to the US) it is clear at the very least he is not putting all his eggs into Uncle Sam's basket.

It also appears that Mr. Abe is attempting to position Japan—and to a certain extent supplant the US-- as the decisive element in the pivot's security architecture, and within both of the competing trade regimes that China and the United States are promoting for the Pacific.

The United States failed to take up Abe on his notion of missile shield collective self-defense and has pointedly discouraged Japanese adventurism on the Senkaku Islands.

The PRC has attempted to exploit the actual and incipient divisions between Japan and the United States by appearing in the somewhat unexpected role of defender of the post World War II order imposed on Asia by the West and the Soviet Union and, by extension, the subordination of Japan and continued US pre-eminence in the region.

Chinese premier Li Keqiang visited Potsdam, Germany on his first overseas trip to extol the 1945 Potsdam Declaration, which called for the unconditional surrender of Japan and the return of territories seized from China, as in "the terms of the Cairo Declaration shall be carried out and Japanese sovereignty shall be limited to the islands of Honshu, Hokkaido, Kyushu, Shikoku and such minor islands as we determine."

Chinese scholars also returned to the issue of the post World War II dispensation to put the issue of the Ryukyu Islands—including Okinawa, a distinctly non-minor island-- in play.

Japan acquired the Ryukyus—actually, China surrendered its claims to the Ryukyus, a crucial distinction if one feels the Ryukyu Islanders, subjects of an independent but tribute paying kingdom, should have a say in the matter—in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Relations between the central Japanese government and Okinawa—the largest Ryukyu Island and site of the kingdom's capital—have frequently been fraught.

At the end of World War II, Okinawa was the site of an apocalyptic battle against US forces that claimed 300,000 lives, including 100,000 Okinawan civilians. A not-inconsiderable section of Okinawan public opinion regards the campaign as a bloody sacrifice of expendable Okinawan subjects to deter an invasion of the Japanese "home islands". After Japan's defeat, the United States exercised occupation authority over the Ryukyu Islands until 1972, when it handed them back to Japanese authority without consulting the Okinawans. Local resentment is compounded by the contin-

ued presence of US military bases imposed on the island, also without the say-so of the local residents.

The Abe government proclaimed April 28 as "National Sovereignty Day" to celebrate the achievement of full Japanese sovereignty over its territory in 1952—full sovereignty, that is, except over Okinawa, which was abandoned to the United States for another 20 years. Many Okinawans regarded the commemoration as a "day of shame" and the prefectural governor of Okinawa boycotted the ceremony.

When Chinese scholars posed their rather legalistic challenge to Japanese sovereignty over the Ryukyu Islands, the PRC was making the point that, if Japan wanted to jettison the baggage of the World War II aggression narrative, it should also be aware that an unwelcome consequence might be that its neighbors and even its Okinawan citizens might choose to question the other, more favorable elements of Japan's postwar deal—like the casual return of an entire island chain to Japan by the United States in a two-government deal despite the apparent stipulations to the contrary of the Potsdam Declaration and in disregard of the desires of its people-- as well.

The Japanese government's reaction to these theories is brusque dismissal—and a willingness to take the diplomatic and economic heat for the sake of advancing its revisionist narrative.

South Korea and the PRC are not backing down, either.

On June 4, South Korea's new ambassador to Japan (and a close confidant of ROK President Park Geun-hye) delivered the message that no summit would be scheduled between the president of the ROK and prime minister of Japan until Japan has "a correct recognition of history and look[s] squarely at history."

Chinese premier Li Keqiang struck a similar note at Potsdam stating that "Any attempts to deny or glorify the wartime aggression during those years are nothing but a challenge to international justice" and, per the press release of the PRC's Ministry of Foreign Affairs:

"[H]istory is an objective existence and a mirror and cited the ancient Chinese "By looking into a mirror, one can make sure that he is dressed properly". Only by facing history squarely, can one have a future."

Eager as Japan is to bury its past, China, South Korea, and the United States are equally interested to keep it alive, in order to support their own national narratives and to keep gain a measure of leverage over an increasingly assertive and independent power in Asia.

In July, all eyes—at least in Asia and Washington—will be on the elections for the upper house of Japan's parliament or Diet. If, as expected, the election is an LDP landslide, the LDP will possess sufficient majorities in both houses to revise the "Peace" constitution. **CP**

**PETER LEE** edits *China Matters*.

# MY HOLLYWOOD ADVENTURE WITH THE CIA

BY JOHN ESKOW

As *CounterPunch* writer Ed Rampell pointed out recently, the stunning covert operation of the 2013 Academy Awards — the moment when Michelle Obama surprised everyone by appearing live from the Oval Office, surrounded by military personnel, to announce that *Argo* had won for Best Picture — was simply the culmination of a long and tender love-affair between Hollywood and the CIA. It's a story of spies lusting for Hollywood glamour, and stars lusting for Washington gravitas, and the crazy hi-jinks that ensue when those lusting stars and lusting politicians collide in the gleaming corridors of power.

I'm here to tell the exact opposite story.

Because I, too, wrote a movie based on a CIA operation. But my reward was not a First Lady's gushing praise, or "the thanks of a grateful nation" — appropriately enough, my rewards were to include a stream of personal insults from Peter Kann — the editor of *The Wall Street Journal* — and three anonymous, crude, but very credible death threats. To be honest, I would've been disappointed with anything less.

In 1988 I was a screenwriter dwelling, like many others, in a fairly-well-furnished limbo; my scripts were getting scooped up by studios — Hollywood was the Klondike then, and the gold-rush was truly feverish — but none were actually getting, you know, produced. Then, one afternoon at the William Morris Agency, a bored Clint Eastwood went flipping through a bunch of scripts on his agent's desk. He stopped when he came to one I'd sold to Warner Brothers on spec a year earlier, called *Pink Cadillac*, a well-regarded script which had almost gotten made with the then-young Michelle Pfeiffer and Kevin Costner, and with Ellen Barkin and Richard Gere, and...Well, within a few days — such was Eastwood's power at that point — the movie was green-lit by the studio, with Eastwood to star and direct. (In the end — unfortunately for my movie — he directed the Charley Parker bio, *Bird*, instead, and had his stunt co-ordinator direct him in *Pink Cadillac*.)

Suddenly, my childhood hero — Clint Eastwood, *The Man With No Name* — had midwived my showbiz career into full, screaming life...and great was the tumult and silliness that followed. (My favorite meeting of this period came when the head of Warner Brothers, the capo di tutti capi, summoned me to meet him for the first and only time. I'd been doing constant rewrites on the script, at Warners' behest, for eighteen months; now, as I sat bewildered across a massive expanse of mahogany desk, the WB boss said: "John, I know we've given you a lot of notes. Let me tell you exactly where it's at. If there's something in the screenplay that we HATED before, and Clint likes it? Now we LOVE it. If there's some-

thing we LOVED before, and Clint doesn't? Now we HATE it. OK?" I laughed; he didn't. I sat there, waiting for more. He looked up after a moment, as if amazed to still see me there. "Thanks for coming in," he said by way of dismissing me.)

Among the offers that came, in the wake of Clint's imprimatur, was a call from a director I had always admired: Bob Rafelson, the visionary behind Jack Nicholson's wonderful *Five Easy Pieces*, among other movies that had defined the '60s rebel ethos. Rafelson was calling to pitch me an idea called *Air America* — an edgy, dark-humored adventure about the CIA's proprietary airline, which in the late '60s was by far the largest airline in the world, flying weapons, personnel, opium and heroin throughout Southeast Asia. I thanked Rafelson for the call, expressed my love for his movies, but said no, firmly — I had absolutely no interest in the project.

Ten days later, having devoured Alfred McCoy's seminal book, *The Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia*, I was on a plane to Bangkok — flying east, from New York — to meet Rafelson and the film's producer, Dan Melnick, who were flying west from L.A. Thus began, in Thailand and Malaysia, an education in blood: a crash (and burn) course in the horrors of a secret CIA war.

Now it's not as if, in eviscerating the CIA, we were bravely going where none had ever dared to go. If anything, the CIA had become an all-too-easy target ever since the Watergate era, serving as a one-size-fits-all Source of Evil in films as diverse as *Three Days of the Condor* and *Lethal Weapon* (which actually includes *Air America* as part of the bad-guy's resume.) As a dramatist, I wanted to go beyond the predictable scenes in which a guy who looks like Robert Duvall in a badly-fitting blue suit orders the death of a hundred innocent brownskinned people in order to cover up some Nefarious Government Secret — even if that particular movie cliché, more than most, was deeply grounded in fact.

And so it was that I found myself waiting for hours in a seedy bar in northern Thailand listening to a Thai string quartet play a very slow — and ever-so-slightly-out-of-tune — chamber-music arrangement of Hank Williams' "I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry". It was a torture of such exquisite banality as to turn Oliver North into a raving Al-Qaeda supporter (not that much of a leap, on second thought.) The bar was in a sleepy village called Udon Thani. During the Viet Nam war, this village was often televised on the evening news — because it was also the home of Udorn Air Force Base, nominally a Thai installation but really the launching-spot for massive American bombing raids over Viet Nam and Cambodia — and, via my *Air America* buddies, over Laos as well, though that war-front was supposed to be "secret."

I was here — drinking the hideous Mekong whiskey and enduring the Thai violinists as they sawed away grimly at the music of a doomed American genius — to meet the man who embodied all the worst horrors of that "secret" war: a legendary guerrilla warrior who was the prototype for the Colonel

Kurtz character played by Marlon Brando in Coppola's epic *Apocalypse Now*. The old warrior, now retired, was named Tony Poe; following the war, he'd married a Thai "princess," settled down as a gentleman farmer, and, according to legend, "gone native." He had only spoken to one other writer in the decade-and-a-half since the war's end. Now — thanks to the ancient ritual of Hollywood money greasing human palms — I'd made contact with him, via a right-wing alcoholic British stringer for *The Bangkok Post*.

I already loathed the drunk stringer, who seemed to have wandered out of an unpublished novel by some Graham Greene wannabe. We'd shared a turbulent flight north from Bangkok, a bad flight further marred by his drunken speechifying and obvious stomach distress. It got worse as we waited for three hours in the bar, poorly serenaded by the Thai Hank Williams violinists — if only they weren't trying so hard! Jesus, they're sweating onto their instruments! — three long hours after Poe was supposed to send a driver to pick us up... Of course, it was no good just driving to Poe's farm — no, this was CIA stuff, so there had to be secret meets, furtive phone calls, etc etc etc ad nauseum.

Finally a sullen driver came and drove us, past miles of rice paddies shimmering in the dusk-light, out to Tony Poe's farm.

Context: back then, the legends about Poe seemed too horrifying to be true. But here's what Wikipedia says about him now (referring to him by his given name, Anthony Poshepny): "In Laos, Poshepny gained the respect of the Hmong forces with practices that were barbaric by agency standards. He paid Hmong fighters to bring him the ears of dead enemy soldiers, and, on at least one occasion, he mailed a bag of ears to the US embassy in Vientiane to prove his body counts. He dropped severed heads onto enemy locations twice in a grisly form of psy-ops. Although his orders were only to train forces, he also went into battle with them and was wounded several times by shrapnel." (Adorable, isn't it: "barbaric by agency standards?")

As we bumped along the rutted Thai roads towards the ranch, the British stringer kept drooling into my ear: "None of your Communist horse-shit now, mate, d'you understand? He's not having it! He fucking hates writers, and he fucking HATES lefties, so don't go being your fucking Lefty Writer Self if you value your physical well-being...and I ain't lying, either."

It got tedious, and malodorous — but I didn't ignore it.

At maybe 5'9", Poe weighed about 290 pounds. He wore a XXX-Large, snowy-white Hanes t-shirt and a colorful red-and-yellow sari wrapped from belly to ankles. He was, in the style of longtime exiles, beginning to lose his English. And, by the time we arrived at his farm, he was well into that night's second case of Thai beer.

And he wasn't making any effort to be friendly...at least, not until I accepted — with some reluctance — his sugges-

tion that, together, we kill the remaining nineteen cans of beer in the case.

From then on, I only remember fragments of conversation. One of them served me well in writing the *Air America* script, and the other one has served a deeper purpose over the years, which I'll try to explain in a moment.

Fragment #1: We are shouting at each other, through a beer-and-Scotch haze, about the ethics of the CIA's strategy in helping smuggle heroin to finance the covert war in Laos. (Even though the movie was vilified in the American press for daring to suggest that the CIA actually did this, no-one in Southeast Asia even bothered to dispute it. Indeed, in Asia — as around the world — if you argued that the US would never smuggle drugs, you'd be laughed out of any adult gathering.) Though wildly drunk, I decide: here's my chance to write a CIA character who's not a cardboard bad-guy! So I drag my rattan chair closer to Poe in the humid Asian night and say: "Why couldn't you guys just say to the American people: yes, we smuggle drugs. No one's ever won a war in this part of the world unless they control the opium trade. It can't be done. We're fighting what we really believe is an evil Communist system, so we have to commit a lesser evil in order to serve a greater good. But we're not gonna treat you like children, America; we're gonna talk to you like adults and tell you what we're actually doing...Huh, Tony? What about that?"

He takes a sip of beer and ponders it for a second. "Nah. They'd never go for it."

And then comes a two-hour memory-gap I will never recover, followed by:

Fragment #2: And this is the one that will underpin forever my sense of what it's like to be a certain kind of fighter, a certain kind of man.

Around 2 AM, we get to a point in the conversation where I suddenly realize that Tony Poe is looming above me in his enormous, blinding-white t-shirt, and shouting down into my face that it was his good friend and CIA trainee, his beloved Felix Rodriguez who supervised the killing of Che Guevara. "MY BUDDY FELIX KILLED FUCKING CHE GUEVARA, OK???"

I recall the rest in slow motion: I stand up, face-to-face with Poe. At the edge of my vision I see the drunken British stringer flinch and throw up both hands, as if to shield himself from an explosion. Eight beers and five whiskies past any semblance of good sense, I shout back at Poe: "CHE GUEVARA WAS A GREAT MAN!"

The Brit lets his hands drop; there will be no surviving this explosion anyhow. There's a moment's deep silence. Then Poe looks at me and says, in a hushed voice: "Of COURSE he was! Che was a great warrior! He fought for his people! I hated what Rodriguez did — they should never have shot him like that! Che Guevara deserved to die in battle!"

Well, it was a long way from that night of swarming insects in the northern Thai ricefields to the morning in Los Angeles

when we read the first reviews of *Air America*. Many critics hated it; a smaller coterie adored it. Peter Kann, the editor of the *Wall Street Journal*, wrote a half-page editorial raging against the CIA-drug premise, denouncing me personally at great length, and throwing out not one but two Jane Fonda smears; he concluded with “this movie would seem to be produced, not by Tri-Star Studio in Hollywood, but Red Star Studio in Hanoi!” Among those who defended the movie were Noam Chomsky and a certain Alexander Cockburn. My favorite review of all came from the show-biz bible *Variety* — not only because it was positive, but because it took note of the movie’s political thesis, and ended by asking a very smart question: “How did they get away with it?”

That is not a question that will ever be asked about *Argo* or *Zero-Dark-Thirty* or *24*. Whatever the merits of these shows — and that’s a conversation for another day — we only have to look at Michelle Obama’s smiling face at the Academy Awards to know exactly how they got away with it. Forever removed from the world of severed ears and murdered revolutionaries, never daring to take the wrong side, ever ready to serve Power, they will never know the joy of “getting away with it”

As for me, I’d rather be back in the darkness with Tony Poe, where politics is worth screaming about, and warriors share something approaching respect. **CP**

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## Malaysia Teeters on the Edge of an Islamist Knife

BY NILE BOWIE

Aside from the international media frenzy surrounding the sacking and trial of opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim for sodomy, and the occasional anti-imperialist tirades of former Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, Malaysia has rarely made international headlines. That is partly because this resource rich multi-ethnic state has been an island of stability since its independence in 1957, preaching a moderate-brand of Islam with a steady focus on economic development. Malaysia is unique in contrast to other states in the region and throughout the Muslim world in that it has given unprecedented cultural and religious autonomy to non-Muslim ethnic Chinese and Indian minorities who wield significant influence over the economy. Although the country has practiced participatory politics and democratic elections from its inception, the ruling party, responsible for steering all developmental efforts since independence, has never been unseated. Covering local politics in the heart of Southeast Asia is a fast-paced exercise, and in Malaysia, mistrust is rampant and

grand allegations are exchanged between political factions like bank notes in a marketplace.

In the fallout of a heated election held in early May, which saw the incumbent Prime Minister Najib Razak and his Barisan Nasional coalition continue its uninterrupted rule, passions are high and those of the social-media generation are advertising their discontent in the streets, thirsty to challenge the infallibility of the regime. Since his coalition failed to take power following the closest fought general election in Malaysian history, opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim has been leading protest rallies throughout the country alleging that the ruling Barisan Nasional coalition resorted to “*massive fraud*” to secure victory in the polls. Over the course of my time in Malaysia, I have reviewed various assessments of Mr. Ibrahim; I’ve had in depth discussions with his former political allies who defected from his opposition coalition, and I’ve sat down with former PM Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, the man who saw Anwar as a son, who groomed him to lead the nation, only to condemn him to political free-fall for rampant corruption and allegations that he sodomised a male aid.

No matter if they were formerly from the government or the opposition, everyone told me the same things about Anwar: that he is narcissistic chameleon, a genius of political opportunism, a master of public rallying and street-theatre, and that he has a ravenous obsession with becoming the Prime Minister of Malaysia. Months before the election Mahathir sat across from me, 87 and still sharp and healthy as ever, and told me how Anwar planned to bring down the government through street action, taking after the Arab Spring uprisings. “The opposition is already receiving money from NGOs that are financed by the US government,” Mahathir told me. “Apparently they would like to see regime change in Malaysia, and they have in mind someone who is known to be very pro-American and in defense of Israel.” To the average Malaysian democracy activist who is ever critical of Mahathir’s shortcomings, this rhetoric is absolute rubbish, seen as diversionary tactic to distract people from the Barisan Nasional’s own corrupt dealings and monopoly on power. Unfortunately for those activists, this author is readily convinced that the Doctor’s prescription is spot on.

### Who is Anwar Ibrahim?

What I’ve observed from speaking to rally-goers and social-medialites is that most Malaysians under 30 know very little about Anwar Ibrahim’s past dealings in government, his flirtation with Wahhabi Islam, and his unabashed shoulder-rubbing with neoconservatives in the Bush administration. Anwar was a man of humble beginnings, raised by a middle-class family. From his early days in politics, he established close alliances with both Wahhabi missionaries and the Muslim Brotherhood; he called for Malaysia to be ruled by a 14th century interpretation of the Koran and sharia law.

Anwar was part and parcel of Saudi Arabia's approach to religious expansion, whereby missionaries are used to recruit Islamists in moderate Sunni states, injecting an alien brand of political Islam with the intention of undermining secular Muslim regimes. Riyadh's drive to Arabize states in Southeast Asia had a lot to do with offsetting the influence of revolutionary Iran, which inspired much of the politically ambitious religious establishment in Malaysia and elsewhere.

Anwar was given his start in government by none other than Dr. Mahathir Mohamad. At the time, Mahathir's biggest political competition was the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS), an Islamist political party that remains a strong component in the opposition coalition even today. Mahathir brought Anwar onboard as the Minister of Culture, Youth, and Sports to offset PAS's influence. Once in government, he began working closely with banks tied to the Muslim Brotherhood and the Wahhabis to build the necessary financial resources needed for his political ascent. Anwar was promoted to Education Minister where he worked to advance the spread of Wahhabi Islamic doctrine in the schools as part of policy that attempted to re-order Malaysian society from the top down. In schools, Muslim prayers were publicly recited, sermons preached, and Islamic festivals celebrated as part of the curriculum, a far-reaching departure from the heretofore multi-ethnic character in national schools.

Mahathir allowed this on his watch, apparently to shore up his support base against PAS, who preached that Malaysia's leadership were decadent, untrue Muslims. During his time in government, Anwar was known to have amassed a significant fortune, in the multi-millions through elite corruption and kickbacks from cronies at Petronas, the state oil company. Anwar had dealings with Al Baraka Bank, the world's largest source of Islamic finance, which generously funded Saudi proxies and their causes from the madrassas in Pakistan to the glitzy capital cities of Southeast Asia. Anwar formed an NGO in the United States, the International Institute for Islamic Thought (IIIT), which labeled itself a harbinger of moderate Islam, and was utilized to influence policymakers in the US government and academia the same individuals who would cry foul and threaten Malaysia with diplomatic consequences over Anwar's six-year detainment after being charged with corruption.

Anwar, ambitious and aspiring to unseat Mahathir, paraded himself around Washington D.C. as the ideal stooge, a force for good that stood for democracy and free markets.

Jonathan Smith vividly describes how US officials "often took with them the belief that if only Anwar were in charge in Malaysia, here at last could be a perfect Muslim democracy. American liberals — amusingly, overwhelmingly Jews — accepted Anwar's projection at face value. To them, he was their tabula rasa: A Muslim who cared about the environment, about global peace and nuclear disarmament, about social justice — basically, about all of their core beliefs,

yet never with any specific detail — Anwar was the noble savage for these men and women who likely believed Malaysia a tropical rainforest where the natives went around naked most of the time." As time went on, Anwar embraced neoliberalism and more brazenly endorsed the values of the American establishment.

During the Asian financial crisis in 1997, Anwar implemented IMF austerity policies, including cutting government expenditures by 20 per cent, stripping funding from Mahathir's enormous infrastructure projects that promised to bring Malaysia into the 21st century — a move that dismayed Mahathir and hastened Anwar's departure from government, which happened dramatically in 1998. In the end, Mahathir rejected the IMF's medicine and took credit



Anwar Ibrahim. Photo: AFP.

for spearheading Malaysia's recovery through currency controls and protectionist measures. After Anwar's stint in prison, he based himself in Washington, where he chaired the Foundation for the Future, a US think-tank established by Elizabeth Cheney, Dick's daughter. While Ibrahim was on trial for sodomy, Paul Wolfowitz and Al Gore authored a joint opinion piece in the Wall Street Journal in support of Ibrahim, while the Washington Post published an editorial calling for consequences that would affect Malaysia's relations with Washington if Ibrahim were to be found guilty. Ibrahim enraged many when he stated that he would support policy to protect the security of Israel in an interview with the Wall Street Journal; this is particularly controversial in Malaysia, where support for Palestine is largely unanimous. Malaysian political scientist Dr. Chandra Muzaffar argues: "It is obvious that by acknowledging the primacy of Israeli security, Anwar was sending a clear message to the deep state and to Tel Aviv and Washington that he is someone that they could trust. In contrast, the [incumbent] Najib government, in spite of its attempts to get closer to Washington, remains critical of Israeli aggression and intransigence. Najib has described the Israeli government as a 'serial killer' and a 'gangster'."

Anwar Ibrahim's closest allies outside of Washington

and Riyadh are in Istanbul, where he enjoys close ties with Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, both devout protégés of the House of Saud. Malaysia with Anwar Ibrahim at the helm would bare strong parallels to the political direction taken by Erdogan's Justice and Development Party, which has steered secular Turkey's domestic policy in a noticeably Islamist direction, while drifting steadily closer into the US-Saudi sphere of influence.

## Popular Grievances & Allegations of Fraud

Because Malaysia exists as a multi-cultural and multi-religious state, both the ruling and opposition coalitions attempt to field candidates that represent the interests of the nation's largest ethnic groups. Approximately 60 percent of Malaysians are Muslim ethnic-Malays, 25 percent are predominantly Buddhist ethnic-Chinese, and 7 percent are mostly Hindu ethnic-Indians. The main parties in the Barisan Nasional governing coalition have traditionally been the United Malays National Organization (UMNO), the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA), and the Malaysian Indian Congress (MCI), although support has dwindled in recent times for the latter two parties. Malaysia has become politically divided, and many — especially the online-savvy middle class — feel extremely disillusioned with corruption that pervades all levels of society, from taxi drivers and hawkers to the elite figures in business and government. Citizen equality is a major concern, especially of minorities who feel sidelined over constitutionally protected affirmative action policies that give ethnic Malays advantages in business and education. Opponents of these affirmative action policies routinely call them intentionally discriminatory, alleging they reflect a “Malay dominance” paradigm that has not been shaken from the ruling polity since independence.

Proponents of the policy argue that it was historically justified because some 60 percent of all Malays lived below the poverty line at the time of independence, and the policy is still required, as the Malay majority are still lowest income earners. It's quite commonplace to find ethnic-Chinese Malaysians railing against their self-perceived status as “second-class citizens,” but these frustrations don't live up to scrutiny, as the conditions Malaysia's Chinese community are subjected to do not resemble that of a deprived community. The Chinese dominate the middle and upper income earning strata, they are not hindered from attending vernacular schools in their mother tongue, from practicing their respective faiths, and they are a vibrant force in politics.

The opposition coalition, Pakatan Rakyat, currently controls three state governments and is led by Anwar Ibrahim's Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR), the staunchly Islamist Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS), and the Chinese-led secular Democratic Action Party (DAP), the latter being by far the strongest force in the coalition, reflective in the fact that

Chinese voters by and large abandoned Barisan Nasional and voted in their favor. Despite being strange bedfellows, the Pakatan Rakyat opposition coalition won massive gains in the recent elections, firmly entrenching a two-coalition system. It's not all roses and sunshine though, these three parties have fundamentally different ideologies, and critics have likened their coalition to a marriage of political opportunism. PAS for example, ardently advocates the implementation of sharia law and hudud Islamic penal code, and from its inception has called for the foundation of an Islamic state. DAP staunchly opposes the implementation of hudud law and the concept of an Islamic state, while Anwar, always a man of many masks, plays the middle ground, saying that hudud is not the official policy of the coalition, but that he personally supports it.

Aside from instilling the perception that Malaysia's electoral process is deeply unfair and rigged in favor of the ruling party, the opposition campaigned on a platform of fighting corruption and creating more equitable wealth distribution, which resonated deeply with the electorate. Pakatan retained their stronghold of Penang while making significant inroads in places like Sabah, Sarawak, and Johor, known to be “fixed deposits” of the ruling party. Even with significant victories achieved by the opposition, Anwar Ibrahim has held steadfast to his pre-election assertion that only “massive fraud” would prevent his coalition's victory. This statement is inherently problematic, because it presupposes that any election result that yields anything other than Anwar's victory is: invalid, illegitimate, and fraud. The opposition notably meted out a steady stream of allegations, which largely remain entirely unsubstantiated. Anwar accused Prime Minister Najib Razak's office of flying in some 40,000 foreign nationals to illegally to vote on behalf of the ruling coalition in key battleground states in Malaysia.

Such an allegation is not only logistically unsound, but bloggers soon pointed out several mathematic discrepancies in the details Anwar provided, and that the feat of transporting such a large volume of individuals could not possibly be accomplished with the alleged flights that took place. At the time of this article being written, he has produced no evidence to validate his accusation. Operators of the airlines Anwar claimed were involved dismissed his claims as baseless rumors. Third-party election monitors, such as the IDEAS Institute, claimed that although structural biases exist, such as in the uneven delineation of voting constituencies and the government's control of mainstream media, the election process “proceeded smoothly” and that “the vast majority of the glitches were not major” lending credibility away from claims of that “massive fraud” took place. The Merdeka Centre, a widely quoted polling agency, also accused the opposition of making a “host of unsubstantiated allegations about the elections”. It shouldn't surprise anyone that Anwar, always a publicity-junkie, declared Pakatan's victory over Twitter before any official results were announced, creating

mass confusion. If compelling evidence exists that proves Barisan Nasional stole the elections, the opposition hasn't made it available for public scrutiny.

### **'Democracy does not work'**

Haris Ibrahim from the pro-opposition group ABU recently vowed to overthrow the ruling coalition by force, stating, "We will take to the streets and take over. If we really want to overthrow them, there is no other way. Democracy does not work." Members of the opposition coalition hold conflicting views regarding attempts to overthrow the government by force; some have condoned it while others have condemned it. Bersih, an electoral watchdog, has promised to mobilize protestors to descend on Malaysia's administrative capital, Putrajaya. The National Endowment for Democracy or NED, is a Washington-based foundation that supports democratic initiatives and US-friendly opposition groups abroad; it provides over \$1 million to various projects in Malaysia each year, and most of the players now calling for overthrowing the regime are the recipients. According to the NED's website, it conducts training, research, and leadership cultivation exercises with the governments of Penang and Selangor, key opposition-held states. Members of Barisan Nasional have denounced Ibrahim's connections to the NED in the Malaysian Parliament, and the lack of transparency surrounding the funding.

The electoral watchdog group Bersih has organized rallies calling for electoral reform, which many criticized as being as thinly veiled anti-government protests due to the participation of key opposition figures. Tunku Abdul Aziz Ibrahim, a key player in the opposition prior to defecting from the DAP, claimed that Americans from US-based foundations were calling the shots and outlining the functions and operations of Bersih. "In the meeting, I was offered to head the watchdog because they said I have the credentials, integrity and credibility for the post. They told me that the movement was to ensure free and fair elections in the country," he said, disclosing that he was offered some \$4,000 monthly plus other perks and allowances for his position. Aziz also accused Malaysia's opposition leader of using Bersih to channel support to his political campaign, "Anwar makes good use of his international networking to get these funds. I don't know whether Bersih leaders knew it or not, but Bersih is Anwar's vehicle to receive international funds under the guise of democracy and free and fair elections. Bersih is not a non-partisan independent organisation. It's Anwar's baby." Aziz resisted overseas funding because he claims it compromises national integrity and dignity. "Local organisations should justify their existence to Malaysians, not to foreigners. Local organisations should not owe their existence and allegiance to foreigners," he stressed.

Upon closer examination of the language used by these

foundations, when they claim to be working toward "broadening the appeal of political parties," a critical question comes to mind — when does so-called 'democracy-promotion' become political interference? The work of the NED has ostensibly blurred the line between the two, while masking their overt backing for actors they support in the benign language of electoral transparency, freedom and the promotion of human rights. The US has displayed an undeniable resurgence of interest in Southeast Asia as part of its Asia Pivot policy, ostensibly as a response to growing Chinese economic influence in the region. PM Najib Razak has attached primary importance to Malaysia's relationship with Beijing, Malaysia's largest trade partner. Washington's backing for Malaysia's US-friendly opposition must be seen in the context of its moves to bolster its military muscle and dominance over the Asia-Pacific region in line with its pivot. Malaysia is a key player in Southeast Asia, and Washington is doing what it can to tip the scale in favor of the opposition after its success in the 2008 elections and the 2013 elections. Despite the current administration's considerable efforts to deepen ties to the US, Anwar's history makes him more of an asset to US policy than the incumbent.

The ruling coalition is far from perfect, it has failed to stifle issues of high-level corruption and elite opulence remains a huge problem. However, Malaysia was transformed from an exporter of rubber and tin into a key industrial player with strong domestic industries under its watch; it has overseen stable economic growth, while promising 3.3 million new jobs in the high-income sector and attracting multi-million dollar investments. The ruling government will likely be able to ride through the coming barrage of protestors out with the express purpose of toppling the government, but analysts say if trends continue, the opposition will likely overcome and take power in the 2018 by the ballot box. PM Najib is now in a delicate position, and he must make greater efforts to address the trust deficit that exists between the people and the Malaysian leadership, and focus on implementing reforms to the EC that are recommended by observer groups to ensure greater transparency. The most pressing and arduous task ahead of him will be reestablishing trust with an angry, highly polarized and wary electorate. Malaysia has never experienced a change in government, but if Anwar Ibrahim ever finds himself at the helm, the nation will walk on uncharted political territory that will bring far-reaching changes, not only in economic and diplomatic directions of the country, but also in the state's relationship with the moderate brand of Islam it was founded upon. **CP**

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# CULTURE & REVIEWS

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## “Accidental Racist”: Days of Future Passed

BY LEE BALLINGER

LL Cool J was seventeen years old when I met him in 1985 at a screening of the rap film *Krush Groove*. He was straight out of middle class Queens, home to many who were taking hip-hop from ground zero in the South Bronx to the rest of the world. LL was near the cutting edge with diamond hard anthems like “I Can’t Live Without My Radio” and “Rock the Bells” with its war cry of “LL Cool J is hard as hell!”

Today he’s soft, just another family-friendly TV star who occasionally puts out hip-hop albums that are, without exception, so bland as to be almost unlistenable.

Yet there he is on country star Brad Paisley’s new album, *Wheelhouse*, standing in for all black Americans on the song “Accidental Racist.” The track is turgid and clumsy, surprising coming from an artist as talented as Paisley. But what it says is more surprising, given that Paisley’s 2009 album *American Saturday Night* turned country music stereotypes on their heads with its embrace of technology, immigration, and the civil rights movement.

“Accidental Racist” is a sung/rapped dialogue between Paisley and LL Cool J in which the country singer says he doesn’t mean anything offensive by wearing a t-shirt with a Confederate flag on it: “I’m just a white man.... caught between southern pride and southern blame.” He’s full of good intentions (“I try to put myself in your shoes and that’s a good place to begin”) but insists he’s “a proud rebel son.” There’s the standard apologia about how slavery (not mentioned by name)

was a mistake that some other folks made a long time ago.

LL Cool J chimes in with a plea to be understood even though he wears sagging pants and gold chains. He says he’s always equated guys in cowboy hats with men in white hoods. After condemning slavery (this time by name), he apologizes for Sherman’s March and gives a shout-out to Robert E. Lee. LL declares that “If you don’t judge my gold chains, I’ll forget the iron chains.”

In his review of Paisley’s *Wheelhouse* in *PopMatters*, Dave Heaton responds that “Accidental Racist” is “saying we should forget about slavery—after all, it wasn’t our fault, it was just our ancestors—and ignore the ways that the legacy of slavery is still around us, every day, manifesting itself in flawed structures and situations within our society.”

On that song, Brad Paisley sings that he’s a “proud rebel son.” But he grew up in West Virginia, which became a Union state when it seceded from the Confederacy because it opposed slavery. Paisley now lives in Los Angeles (not too far from LL Cool J) where he’s married to Hollywood actress Kimberly Williams, a native of Rye, New York. Paisley isn’t speaking as himself on “Accidental Racist.” He’s casting himself in a role, playing a character who claims to speak for the white South.

Well, does he? There’s no simple answer to that question.

In 2001 in Mississippi, there was a vote on whether the 1894 state flag, with the Confederate battle flag reproduced in its upper left corner, should be retained or whether the state should adopt a new flag without the Stars and Bars. There was a large turnout and the 1894 flag won by a nearly two to one margin. The vote split almost entirely along racial lines.

On “Accidental Racist,” Brad Paisley says “When I put on that shirt the only thing I meant to say is I’m a Skynyrd fan.” Even though personal, it’s hard to accept his benign assessment of the Confederate flag on a t-shirt as accurate. “Accidental Racist” venerates Confederate commander Robert E. Lee and skewers Union general William Tecumseh Sherman, whose march to the sea across Georgia helped to end the Civil War and the slavery which caused it.

The Confederate flag is not a symbol of misunderstandings about cowboy hats and gold chains. The Stars and Bars is the battle flag of a class of slaveowners who went to war in an attempt to expand slavery throughout the Western hemisphere. In Marbury, Alabama, Confederate flags fly each day at Confederate Memorial Park, which has an annual budget of \$542,000, paid for entirely by taxpayers, both black and white. The more than one hundred thousand Southern whites and the hundreds of thousands of slaves who fought for the Union are not honored there or anywhere else.

“The slavery of the new Cotton Kingdom in the nineteenth century must either die or conquer a nation—it could not hesitate or pause.”—W.E.B. DuBois

Brad Paisley positions himself as a symbol of a monolithic white South. There is no such thing. A closer look at history shows there have always been two white Souths. Before the civil war, slaveowners forcefully ended poor whites’ traditional practice of using land in common for raising food and livestock. During the Civil War, there were massive desertions of whites from the Confederate army while the soldiers’ wives led bread riots across the South. After the Civil War, there were six million white sharecroppers as compared to five million black sharecroppers. Today, Southern-based oil barons control much of the world while in

Mississippi there is a foreclosure every 22 minutes and the majority of these soon-to-be-homeless are white. The Confederate flag represents only one half of these unequal equations—the Southern one per cent.

One reason for confusion about this is that for so long the South seemed to be a society defined entirely by race. Blacks and whites were kept separate—at first by law, then by custom and coercion. But that reality is changing.

In 1963, the state of Virginia prosecuted an interracial couple for getting married. Eight years later, Duane Allman and Gregg Allman of the Allman Brothers Band spent two days in an Alabama jail for the “crime” of attempting to have breakfast with a black man (their drummer). A generation after that, I found myself speaking to the Aliceville, Alabama High School football team. The school had been recently integrated because some white parents could no longer afford to send their children to segregated private academies. When I finished, some of the white players came up to me and thanked me for recognizing that not all Southern whites are racist.

On Super Tuesday in 1988, Presidential candidate Jesse Jackson got a shockingly big chunk of the white vote: 15 per cent in Georgia, 16 per cent in Mississippi, 20 per cent in Louisiana, and 25 per cent in South Carolina. Jackson did so well because he was a constant presence on picket lines,

at homeless shelters, and at rallies of bankrupt farmers.

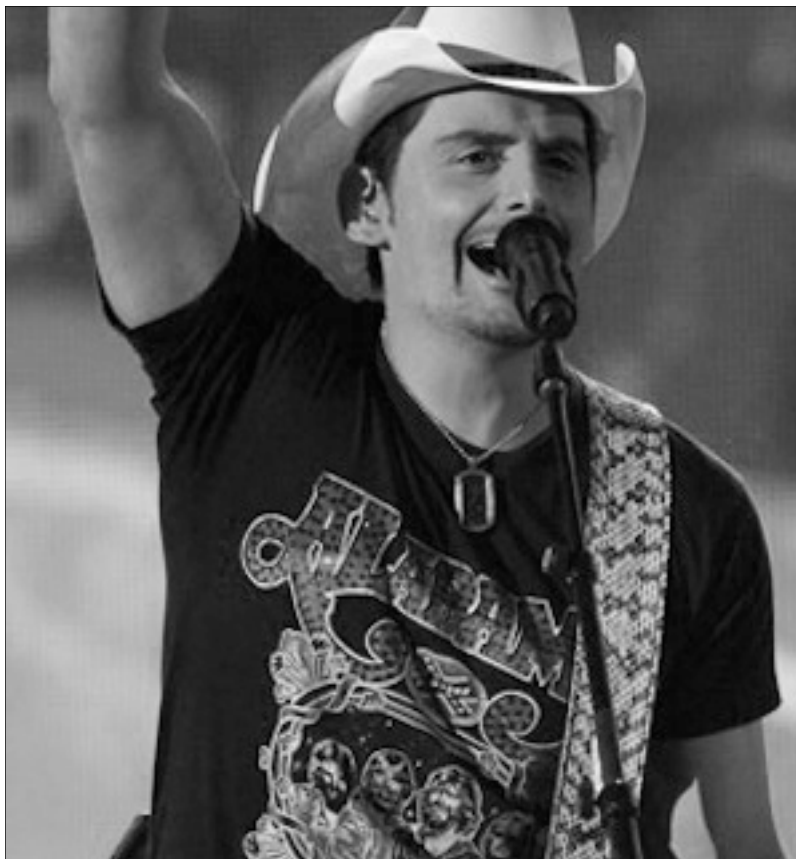
Between 1980 and 2010, the number of new marriages between blacks and whites in the South grew rapidly until it almost doubled the national average. Virginia—a state which once prosecuted an interracial married couple all

The integrated prom did take place. Mayor Terry Graham said: “Black and white kids ride to the Dairy Queen together, they go to ball games and most people don’t think anything of it.”

In Charleston, Mississippi, the first integrated prom ever took place in 2008. In direct competition with a separate white prom, it won hands down. In 2013, the same thing happened at Wilcox County High School in southern Georgia, where the county school system is so poor that students attend classes just four days a week. Mixed dating is common there and three times as many kids went to the first integrated prom as to the white one.

This push for social integration didn’t take place in Southern hipster enclaves like Austin, Oxford, or Athens. It happened in desperately poor small towns, the kind of places that are often casually dismissed as “redneck.”

In 2009, I was at a planning meeting for a march that would go from the Mississippi Delta to Detroit for the 2010 U.S. Social Forum. The meeting was held in Glendora, Mississippi, a small impoverished town not far from legendary Highway 61. On the same day we were taken to see the spot in the river where the body of lynching victim Emmett Till was found in 1954, we watched two prisoners from the nearby private prison pick up the garbage in Glendora. They wore striped uniforms. They were white and their supervisor was black. When you turn



Brad Paisley wearing Alabama shirt featuring Confederate flag. Photo: AP

the way to the Supreme Court—led the pack. One reason for the rapid increase in interracial marriages is what’s happening in the high schools.

In 1994 in Wedowee, Alabama, principal Hulond Humphries tried to prevent interracial dating at the prom for Randolph High School, which was 62% white. Humphries told junior class president ReVonda Bowen, who had a white father and a black mother, that her parents had “made a mistake” in conceiving her. This led to demonstrations and the establishment of freedom schools in African-American churches.

off Highway 61 on the way to Glendora, you soon run into a magnificent new mansion right by the road, just a stone's throw from the Hopson plantation. Its owners are black. In nearby Clarksdale, some black families now have the money to send their kids to private academies.

Poverty (and wealth) continue to spread across racial lines, yet despite recent changes, the South is hardly post-racial. For instance, black median income in Mississippi is only 51% of white median income. A white friend of mine who lives in the South and is married to a black woman tells me that not only are they harassed but that in his small town young men driving pickup trucks and waving Confederate flags often chase blacks at night. As Dave Heaton wrote, "The legacy of slavery is still around us."

It wasn't long ago that "Southern" was assumed simply to mean "white." Today, according to *The New Mind of the South* author Tracy Thompson, black people who live in the South are more likely than their white neighbors to identify themselves as Southerners. Meanwhile, there are millions of Mexican immigrants living all across the South. Houston, Dallas, Nashville, Charlotte, Atlanta, Raleigh, and Orlando have some of the nation's fastest-growing foreign populations. There is more internal migration in the United States to the South than to any other region.

The pace of change below the Mason-Dixon line is likely to increase. White Southerners under 30 voted for Obama in 2012 at roughly the same rate (40 per cent) as white Americans generally (43%). The fact that Obama is no improvement on his predecessor doesn't diminish the fact that an important social barrier is being breached. There is a growing generation gap in the South and all the former Confederate states except Mississippi and Louisiana gained between 5 and 10 per cent in under age ten population in the last decade (Texas was at 17 per

cent). During the same period of time, under age ten populations declined in Illinois, Michigan, New York, and California.

The multi-racial, multi-lingual South will have a major impact on the 21<sup>st</sup> century. "Accidental Racist," despite its flaws, is one reflection of that. It's one of many rap/country collaborations (Taylor Swift/T-Pain, Tim McGraw/Nelly, Snoop Dogg/Willie Nelson) that reflect the blurring of racial lines. Nashville insiders tell me that not only is the motive behind these records mostly to create new marketing tools, but that they are being promoted only to country audiences. But that's just typical music industry cynicism and ignorance. If combining rap and country reaches a larger audience, that indicates that the country audience is becoming more open-minded. Can country music serve to counter the media image of the black thug? Can hip-hop be a vehicle for overcoming redneck stereotypes? We may be about to find out.

But the potential implications of the rap/country fusion go far beyond the "forgive and forget" mantra of "Accidental Racist." There are indications that a significant section of the South is straining to find a way to move forward politically.

For example, a study by the Institute for Southern Studies revealed the South to be the most anti-war region of the country. Blacks and whites in Tennessee sat in at the Democratic governor's office for over three months to try to prevent the end of their health care coverage. In 2004, Alabama voters opted to keep the section of their state constitution which said that there is no right to public education. But in 2012, that relic of segregation was voted out by 61% of voters. They were influenced by the fact that during the previous five years funding for public education in Alabama had been cut by more than \$1 billion.

Even the Mississippi elections of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, which seemed to verify the strength of the old segregated

South, revealed that something new was struggling to be born.

Consider the case of Senate District 4, which occupies the far northeastern corner of the state" write Jere Nash and Andy Taggart in *Mississippi Politics: The Struggle for Power 1976-2006*. "Less than 10 per cent of its voters are African American and, since 1992 Travis Little has served as its senator. If there is a family that is synonymous with the local politics of a county, it is the Little family in Alcorn County. In 2003, Little switched parties and ran for reelection as a Republican. His lone Democratic opponent was Eric Powell, a native of Alcorn County who worked at the local paper mill in Tishomingo County. What makes this story noteworthy is that Powell is black. The new flag received 2,161 votes in this district compared to 12,865 for the 1894 flag. In the 2003 general election, however, Powell came close to winning, receiving 7,819 votes to Little's 8,449 votes. The contrast was even more telling in Powell's home county of Tishomingo, where the 1894 flag won 2,262 to 163 in those areas allocated to his senate district. Powell defeated Little in those same precincts 1,664 to 1,271.

A black worker nearly defeats a scion of the Mississippi ruling class in a district that's over 90 per cent white. Not only that, five years later Eric Powell was elected State Senator from District 4. One of his first acts in office was to successfully sponsor a bill which raised unemployment benefits.

All in all, it sounds like a different song of the South is being written. We should be ready to hear it. **CP**

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