

# CounterPunch

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ALEXANDER COCKBURN AND JEFFREY ST. CLAIR

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## Alabama's Awful New Immigration Law, HB56

By Stewart J. Lawrence

Step aside, Arizona – there's a new immigrant bully in town. It's actually a very old bully: Alabama, one of the centers of Jim Crow resistance to the black civil rights movement of the 1960s, and the state where Martin Luther King Jr. was imprisoned and first emerged as a national leader, has just declared itself ground zero in the burgeoning right-wing campaign to deny illegal immigrants access to job, education, and health care, all the while stepping up local police enforcement to force them to return "home."

According to the National Association of State Legislatures, some two dozen states have introduced a record number of immigrant crackdown measures during the first quarter of 2011 – and, thus far, nearly 150 have passed. But none is as sweeping or as punitive, perhaps, as the package of measures signed into law last week by Alabama's Republican Gov. Robert Bentley, a Southern Baptist deacon who told local media that only some of his fellow Alabamans – born-again Christians – are "truly" his "brothers."

Known as HB 56, Bentley's new law makes it a crime for anyone in Alabama to hire, rent an apartment, or even give a ride to an illegal immigrant, and also requires public elementary and high schools to determine their students' legal status and to report that information to public authorities. In addition, the law completely bars illegal immigrants from attending Alabama public colleges and universities, while denying them all state and local health benefits – including, apparently, emergency care.

In a now-familiar argument, sup-

## *Worse Than Yugoslavia and Iraq?*

## The Press and NATO's Attack on Libya

By Alexander Cockburn and Patrick Cockburn

Could it be that the press coverage of NATO's Libyan onslaught is actually worse than the reporting on NATO's attacks on the former Yugoslavia in the late 1990s, or on Iraq in the run-up to the 2003 invasion by the U.S.A. and its coalition partners?

A strong case can be made that it is.

In the case of both of the earlier NATO interventions, the debates pro and con were accompanied by many journalistic and official or semi-official investigations, most of them blatantly partisan, but some offering substantive claims about such issues as war crimes, weapons of mass destruction, the actual as opposed to self-proclaimed motives of the assailants, and kindred issues.

Mark the contrast with the Libyan intervention. In less than a month, from mid-February to mid-March, we moved from vague allegations of Gaddafi's supposed "genocide" or "crimes against humanity" to two separate votes in the U.N. Security Council, which permitted a NATO mission to establish a "no-fly" zone to protect civilians.

By the time U.N. Security Council Resolution 1973 had been voted through on March 17, France had already formally recognized the jerry-rigged rebel committee in Benghazi as the legitimate government of Libya. By the end of May, it was being openly stated by senior figures in the relevant NATO governments that "regime change" was the objective and the eviction of Gaddafi a sine qua non of the mission.

Also, by late May, it was apparent that the rebels' military capacities were modest in the extreme, that Gaddafi's eviction was not going to be the overnight affair

predicted in western capitals, also that NATO's bombardments were not having the requisite effect.

Reporting throughout, both in the corporate press and in many allegedly "progressive" venues, has been lamentable. In the crucial February 15 – March 17 time slot, there was no determined effort to investigate the charges against Ghaddafi, leveled in the U.N. Security Council resolutions and by NATO principals such as Obama and Clinton, the U.K.'s prime minister Cameron, or President Sarkozy and his foreign minister.

The amazing vagueness of news stories of this – or indeed any – topic coming out of Libya has been conspicuous. Here, remember, we have a regime accused in U.N. Security Council Resolution 1973 of "widespread and systematic attacks ... against the civilian population [that] may amount to crimes against humanity." We have a press corps and insurgents ready and eager to report anything discreditable to the Gaddafi regime.

Yet since mid-February the reporting out of Libya has had a striking lack of persuasive documentation of butchereries or abuses commensurate with the language lavished on the regime's presumptive conduct. Time and again one read vague phrases like "thousands reportedly killed by Gaddafi's mercenaries" or Gaddafi "massacring his own people," delivered without the slightest effort to furnish supporting evidence. It was the secondhand allegation of massacres that drove both news coverage and U.N. activities – particularly in the early stage, when U.N. Resolution 1970 was adopted, calling for sanctions and the referral of Gaddafi's closest circle to the International Criminal

Court (ICC).

News reports in mid-March, such as those by the McClatchy news chain's reporters Jonathan Landay, Warren Strobel and Shashank Bengali, contained no claims of anything approaching a "crime against humanity," the allegation in Resolution 1973. Yet by February 23 the propaganda blitz was in full spate, with Clinton denouncing Gaddafi and with Reagan's "mad dog of the Middle East" phrase exhumed as the preferred way of describing the Libyan leader.

The U.N. commissioner for human rights, Navi Pillay, started denouncing the Libyan government as early as February 18; U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon joined Pillay on February 21. The U.N. News Center reported that Ban was "outraged at press reports that the Libyan authorities have been firing at demonstrators from war planes and helicopters" (our italics). In these early days, no one who represented the Libyan government was permitted to address the council. Only defectors speaking on behalf of Libya were given the floor.

Now, remember that on March 10 French President Sarkozy, a major player in NATO's coalition of the willing against Libya, declared the Libyan National Transition Council the only legitimate representative of the Libyan people. So,

Gaddafi was facing a formal armed insurrection – not a protest movement demanding "democracy" – led by a shadowy entity based in Benghazi, one of whose more diligent enterprises was the establishment of a "central bank." Seven days later, Resolution 1973 made clear that attempts to suppress this insurrection would elicit intervention by NATO.

The political complexion and origins of the rebel leadership and its backers received only fleeting attention. Topics such as the rivalry between the French and Italian oil companies, or the input of other international oil majors, and major U.S. banks and financial institutions were rarely touched upon.

The coverage of any fighting was often laughable. The press corps in Benghazi breathlessly described minor skirmishes involving a tank or two, or some armed vehicles, as mighty engagements.

News stories suggest mobile warfare on the scale of the epic dramas of the Kursk salient or the battle for Stalingrad in World War Two. In fact, the mighty armies contending along the highway west of Benghazi would melt into the bleachers at a college baseball game.

The "no-fly zone" prompted some 12,000-plus NATO sorties. As with any bombing, civilians died. Since the beginning of NATO operations, a total of 12,887 sorties, including 4,850 air strike sorties, were conducted up to June 27.

A team of Russian doctors wrote to the president of the Russian Federation, Dmitry Medvedev, as follows:

"Today, 24 March, 2011, NATO aircraft and the U.S. all night and all morning bombed a suburb of Tripoli – Tajhura (where, in particular, is Libya's Nuclear Research Center). Air Defense and Air Force facilities in Tajhura were destroyed back in the first 2 days of strikes and more active military facilities in the city remained, but today the object of bombing are barracks of the Libyan army, around which are densely populated residential areas, and, next to it, the largest of Libya's Heart Centers. Civilians and the doctors could not assume that common residential quarters will be about to become destroyed, so none of the residents or hospital patients was evacuated.

"Bombs and rockets struck residential houses and fell near the hospital. The glass of the Cardiac Center building was broken, and in the building of the maternity ward for pregnant women with

heart disease a wall collapsed and part of the roof. This resulted in ten miscarriages whereby babies died, the women are in intensive care, doctors are fighting for their lives. Our colleagues and we are working seven days a week, to save people. This is a direct consequence of falling bombs and missiles in residential buildings, resulting in dozens of deaths and injuries, which are operated and reviewed now by our doctors. Such a large number of wounded and killed, as during today, did not occur during the total of all the riots in Libya. And this is called 'protecting' the civilian population?"

The Libyan government says it is preparing a report that will detail NATO terrorism and crimes against the civilian population, alleging the bombing of 294 civilian targets, and the killing and wounding a total of 6,121 in the first hundred days of NATO targeting.

With the Libyan intervention, everything is out of proportion. Gaddafi is scarcely the acme of monstrosity conjured up by Obama or Mrs. Clinton or Sarkozy. In four decades, Libyans rose from being among the most wretched in Africa to considerable elevation in terms of social amenities. In a detailed fairly recent report ("The Situation of Children and Women in Libya," UNICEF Middle East and North Africa Regional Office, November 2010), UNICEF noted that Libya had important socio-economic achievements to its credit. In 2009, it enjoyed:

- a buoyant growth rate, with GDP having risen from \$27.3 billion in 1998 to \$93.2 billion by 2009, according to the World Bank;
- high per capita income (estimated by the World Bank at \$16,430); high literacy rates (95 per cent for males and 78 per cent for females, aged fifteen and above);
- high life expectancy at birth (74 years overall; 77 for females and 72 for males);
- and a consequent ranking of 55 out of 182 countries in terms of overall "Human Development."

In terms of the distribution of oil revenues it would be instructive to compare Libya's record to those of other oil-producing nations. In terms of evil deeds, is Gaddafi a Mobutu, a Bokassa, a Saddam, or any U.S. president? Surely not. President Obama's hands are stained with more blood and suffering. Unfortunately, the failure to do any proper reporting stretched far into the pro-

## CounterPunch

EDITORS

**ALEXANDER COCKBURN**  
**JEFFREY ST. CLAIR**

ASSISTANT EDITOR

**ALEVINA REA**

BUSINESS

**BECKY GRANT**  
**DEVA WHEELER**

DESIGN

**TIFFANY WARDLE**

COUNSELOR

**BEN SONNENBERG**  
**1937-2010**

CounterPunch

P.O. Box 228

Petrolia, CA 95558

1-800-840-3683

counterpunch@counterpunch.org

www.counterpunch.org

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gressive/left sector. Substantial slabs of what passes for the left in America were ecstatic at the intervention – a “good one” at last. – and the vacuous “letter to the left” by professor Juan Cole was excitedly passed from hand to hand and replicated on almost every progressive website. Back in 2005, Cole was counseling the heightened use in Iraq of “special forces and air power.

Gaddafi’s alleged slaughter of his own people, and alleged ordering of mass rapes, formed the justification for the interventionist crusade and of the Security Council resolutions, draped with the imprimatur of the International Criminal Court. These charges were endlessly recycled by the press, without any serious attempt at verification.

By mid to late June, human rights organizations were casting doubt on claims of mass rape and other abuses perpetrated by forces loyal to Gaddafi. An investigation by Amnesty International failed to find evidence for these human rights violations and in many cases has discredited or cast doubt on them. It also found indications that, on several occasions, the rebels in Benghazi appeared to have knowingly made false claims or manufactured evidence.

The findings by the investigators were sharply at odds with the views of the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Luis Moreno-Ocampo, who told a press conference that “we have information that there was a policy to rape in Libya those who were against the government. Apparently he [Colonel Gaddafi] used it to punish people.”

Donatella Rovera, senior crisis response adviser for Amnesty, who was in Libya for three months after the start of the uprising, said to Patrick Cockburn in late June that “we have not found any evidence or a single victim of rape, or a doctor who knew about somebody being raped.” She stressed this does not prove that mass rape did not occur, but there is no evidence to show that it did. Liesel Gertholtz, head of women’s rights at Human Rights Watch, which also investigated the charge of mass rape, said, “We have not been able to find evidence.”

In one instance, two captured pro-Gaddafi soldiers presented to the international media by the rebels claimed that their officers, and later themselves, had raped a family with four daughters. Ms. Rovera says that when she and a col-

league, both fluent in Arabic, interviewed the two detainees, one 17 years old and another 21, alone and in separate rooms, they changed their stories and gave differing accounts of what had happened. “They both said they had not participated in the rape and just heard about it,” she said. “They told different stories about whether or not the girls’ hands were tied, whether their parents were present, and about how they were dressed.”

Seemingly the strongest evidence for mass rape appeared to come from a Libyan psychologist, Dr. Seham Sergewa, who says she distributed 70,000 questionnaires in rebel-controlled areas and along the Tunisian border, of which over 60,000 were returned. Some 259 women volunteered that they had been raped, of whom Dr. Sergewa said she interviewed 140 victims.

Asked by Diana Eltahawy, Amnesty International’s specialist on Libya, if it would be possible to meet any of these women, Dr. Sergewa replied that “she had

### **“We have not found any evidence or a single victim of rape, or a doctor who knew about somebody being raped.”**

lost contact with them,” and was unable to provide documentary evidence.

The accusation that Viagra had been distributed to Gaddafi’s troops to encourage them to rape women in rebel areas first surfaced in March, after NATO had destroyed tanks advancing on Benghazi. Ms. Rovera says that rebels dealing with the foreign media in Benghazi started showing journalists packets of Viagra, claiming they came from burned-out tanks, though it is unclear why the packets were not charred.

A substantive charge of rape came from Eman al-Obeidy who burst into a hotel in Tripoli on March 26, to tell journalists she had been gang-raped before being dragged away by the Libyan security services.

Rebels have repeatedly charged that mercenary troops from Central and West Africa have been used against them. The Amnesty investigation found there was no evidence for this. “Those shown to journalists as foreign mercenaries were later quietly released,” says Ms. Rovera.

“Most were sub-Saharan migrants working in Libya without documents.” Others were not so lucky and were lynched or executed. Ms. Rovera found two bodies of migrants in the Benghazi morgue, and others were dumped on the outskirts of the city. She says, “The politicians kept talking about mercenaries, which inflamed public opinion, and the myth has continued because they were released without publicity.”

One story, to which credence was given by the foreign media early on in Benghazi, was that eight to ten government troops who refused to shoot protesters were executed by their own side. Their bodies were shown on TV. But Ms. Rovera says there is strong evidence for a different explanation. She says amateur video shows them alive after they had been captured, suggesting it was the rebels who killed them.

NATO intervention started on March 19, with air attacks to “protect” people in Benghazi from massacre by advancing pro-Gaddafi troops. There is no doubt that civilians did expect to be killed after threats of vengeance from Gaddafi. During the first days of the uprising in eastern Libya, security forces shot and killed demonstrators and people attending their funerals, but there is no proof of mass killing of civilians.

Most of the fighting during the first days of the uprising was in Benghazi, where 100 to 110 people were killed, and in the city of Baida to the east, where 59 to 64 were killed, says Amnesty. Most of these were probably protesters, though some may have obtained weapons. There is no evidence that aircraft or heavy anti-aircraft machine guns were used against crowds. Spent cartridges picked up after protesters were shot at came from Kalashnikovs or similar caliber weapons.

The Amnesty findings confirm a recent report by the International Crisis Group, which found that while the Gaddafi regime had a history of brutally repressing opponents, there was no question of “genocide.”

The report adds that “much Western media coverage has from the outset presented a very one-sided view of the logic of events, portraying the protest movement as entirely peaceful and repeatedly suggesting that the regime’s security forces were unaccountably massacring unarmed demonstrators who presented no security challenge.”

With so many countries out of bounds, journalists have flocked to Benghazi, in Libya, which can be reached from Egypt without a visa. Alternatively they go to Tripoli, where the government allows a carefully monitored press corps to operate under strict supervision. Having arrived in these two cities, the ways in which the journalists report diverge sharply. Everybody reporting out of Tripoli expresses understandable skepticism about what government minders seek to show them as regards civilian casualties caused by NATO air strikes or demonstrations of support for Gaddafi. By way of contrast, the foreign press corps in Benghazi, capital of the rebel-held territory, shows surprising credulity toward more subtle but equally self-serving stories from the rebel government or its sympathizers.

The Libyan insurgents were adept at dealing with the press from an early stage, and this included skilful propaganda to put the blame for unexplained killings on the other side. It is a weakness of journalists that they give wide publicity to atrocities, evidence for which may be shaky when first revealed. But when the

stories turn out to be untrue or exaggerated, they rate scarcely a mention.

It is all credit to Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch that they have taken a skeptical attitude to atrocities until proven.

There is nothing particularly surprising about the rebels in Benghazi making things up or producing dubious witnesses to Gaddafi's crimes. They will understandably use propaganda as a weapon of war. But it does show naivety on the part of the foreign Press Corps, who almost universally sympathize with the rebels, to the extent that they swallow whole so many atrocity stories fed to them.

The only massacre by the Gaddafi regime, involving hundreds of victims, which is so far well attested is the killings at Abu Salim prison in Tripoli in 1996, when up to 1,200 prisoners died, according to a credible witness who survived.

Battlefronts are always awash with rumors of impending massacre or rape, which spread rapidly among terrified people who may be the intended victims. Understandably enough, they do not want to wait around to find out how true these stories are. Earlier this year, Patrick Cockburn was in Ajdabiyah, a front-line town an hour and a half's drive south of Benghazi, when he saw car loads of panic-stricken refugees fleeing up the road. They had just heard an entirely untrue report via *al-Jazeera Arabic* that pro-Gaddafi forces had broken through.

Likewise, *al-Jazeera* was producing uncorroborated reports of hospitals being attacked, blood banks destroyed, women raped, and the injured executed. One symbol of the wretched reporting of what increasingly resembles an old-style colonial smash-and-grab war is that the historic downtown building in Benghazi outside of which the rebels stage their rallies is in fact the hq of al-Jazeera and thus the reason why the rallies are staged there. Contrast this with the refusal, reported by Franklin Lamb on CounterPunch's website, of some western journalists to attend a July 1 rally in Tripoli because they were afraid of potential danger or because their stateside bureaus suggested they stay away "so as not legitimize the gathering." CP

*This report is based on work done across the eight weeks by both writers, some of which has been featured on our CounterPunch website.*

## Interview with Jan Haaken Feminism's Pyrrhic Victory?

By Mike Snedeker

**M**ike Snedeker: Jan Haaken has just published an excellent book, *Hard Knocks*, a history of one of the profound social movements of recent decades, the effort to bring the issue of domestic violence – something never officially approved of but nonetheless privately tolerated – into the public sphere.

Women and children can now more realistically rely on police to show up. The state's interest in protecting women, and on looking into what goes on in the family, is now the norm. You have written a history centered on struggle; you're also a feminist and a psychologist. What did your background mean for you as you wrote the book? And can you talk about something important that you discovered while researching the history of battered women's shelters?

**Jan Haaken:** When the battered women's movement gained moral and political ground in the 1980s, psychologists were politely asked to leave the table when it came to talking about domestic violence. In moving from framing domestic violence as a private issue to a public issue – from a personal to a political problem – feminists generally viewed psychologists as the enemy. Psychologists, or counselors, were roundly criticized for making excuses for abusive men, for redeeming them based on their own histories of abuse or other traumatic childhood experiences.

Feminists also called psychologists on their tendencies to position women as responsible for failing to rein unruly husbands. So, a lot of the movement was organized in opposition to psychology. As a feminist psychologist, I became interested more in the group dynamics and social psychology of the domestic violence movement than in the role of personal pathology. This focus drew on my longstanding interest in the role of storytelling in movements for social change, and particularly storytelling that arouses discomfort in listeners, or subverts the

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dominant social scripts.

The battered woman story, much like that of the incest survivor in the 1990s, gathered up considerable social symbolic freight as a cautionary tale over time as it achieved various political victories. I wanted to enlist the tools of social psychology to understand how the battered wife story operated as a cautionary tale, as a story with which many women could identify, even those not directly affected by violence. Through interviews with hundreds of advocates in different geographical areas, I began to explore social and historical forces that shape how stories of domestic violence get told and to recover some of the rich narrative history of this movement that had been lost.

One inadvertent effect of the very success of this movement was that the stories over time conformed increasingly to middle-class models of womanhood. The accounts were steadily laundered of any unsettling, unfeminine traits in casting a wholly righteous victim escaping an equally one-dimensional brute.

While oppressed people often bear the burden of demonstrating their worth in making claims for public support, I show in the book why women have carried a particularly heavy burden of proving their virtue, and how domestic violence campaigns internalized this anxiety by repressing accounts of women who were not so virtuous.

The insistence that all female violence is defensive, for example, means that we leave outside the folds of the movement women who are aggressive, or women who take their histories of abuse into relationships with men that may have as much to do with those histories as they do with the immediate violent threats of their male partners.

**MS:** You structure the book around myths and countermyths. While the movement has long used this strategy of opposing cultural myths with facts, you oppose the standard myths with what you call countermyths. One traditional myth you include in the book, the claim that domestic violence happens only among the poor, is often countered by feminist advocates with the fact that domestic violence cuts across all class, race and ethnic lines. Feminist activists would say that this is a fact. You say that this feminist claim is actually a countermyth. What is the distinction you are making here?

**JH:** Anyone who has been to a domestic violence training will recognize the rhetorical device of “myth versus fact” handouts. I don’t think I’ve been to one over the last twenty years where a myth/fact sheet hasn’t been distributed. They’ve really helped challenge and debunk dominant ideology in trumping myths with factual claims that usually involve data – the actual number of different types of people who are abused, for instance.

But my psychological intervention in that rhetorical device is to say that facts never trump myths or ideologies. Facts always circulate in a context that has to be understood. One can understand the fact or the claim that domestic violence is more common in poor communities either in a right-wing way or a left-wing way. One can say that poor people are more violent because they are genetically predisposed to violence, or that poor communities are more violent because they suffer more of the conditions that lead to violence. This feminist “fact” that domestic violence is not related to economic conditions, and that women of all social classes are equally vulnerable to violence, has the effect of repressing the range of women’s stories, the different histories of violence women bring to this movement.

Both Beth Ritchie and Kimberlé Crenshaw have described this feminist factual claim as operating as a gag order within the movement in closing off discussion of links between poverty and violence. So, the countermyth that domestic violence cuts across the lines of race and class is partly true. Wife abuse or woman battering does occur in affluent homes. But there is enormous empirical evidence that rates of violence are much higher in poor communities, where life is generally meaner.

To argue that the correlation between poverty and violence is not a perfect one and, therefore, should not be included in our causal accounts is quite absurd. No causal factor alone explains a social problem. Not all smokers develop lung cancer. In fact, most never do. But we would not then claim that the link between smoking and lung cancer is a myth, unless we were representing the tobacco industry. So I’m very wary of this rhetorical strategy of opposing myths with supposed facts.

**MS:** These feminist facts, what you term countermyths, do have a critical ele-

ment, but sometimes their manipulation is quite deliberate. In 1974, when people were trying to gain funding for child abuse prevention and treatment, Senator Mondale directed advocates to not testify that abuse happens more commonly in poor communities. He said, essentially, that advocates would not get funding unless they could portray this as something that happens equally across class lines, in every demographic of America. The real truth, as you’ve mentioned, is that poverty hurts – poverty stings. It heightens life’s tension and it heightens violence within the home and outside the home. But the advocates and politicians knew that, for funding purposes, no one wanted to see or consider this truth.

**JH:** But it is also true that bringing social class into the argument often involves dragging in crude stereotypes and class prejudices, like the early popular literature on incest that casts the father as an uncivilized guy living in the back woods who thinks nothing of having sex with his daughter and dragging his wife around by her hair. Yet the movement did not acknowledge the downside of reframing the wife-beating story as a middle-class woman’s dilemma.

Indeed, the Bradley-Angle House, one of the oldest and most interesting domestic violence shelters in the world, started as a house for street women. Prostitutes. Women who got into bar fights. Rough women who lived on the streets. A lot of lesbians who had been shut out from their homes. The Bradley-Angle organizers talked about how difficult it was to get funding for street women and prostitutes – but if you had a mother with a toddler in tow, fleeing her demonic husband, you were more apt to get funding. There was a consciousness of this early on. But I think memory of the origins of that strategy became repressed within the movement itself.

**MS:** Your second myth is that it takes two to tango, that domestic violence is an interactive phenomenon. The feminist countermyth is that men initiate 95 per cent of violence in couples.

**JH:** This has been an important aspect of the movement: moving away from violence as a general human problem to the claim that violence actually is a male problem. But we overshot the mark. The cost of insisting on violence as a male habit of power and control was in losing ground on how to deal with female

violence or aggression that is not simply defensive. The main feminist argument was that when women are violent, it is because they are pushed to the wall and only fight back defensively. But that position, as an *a priori* stance, keeps women as perpetual innocents, as children before the law. So, an unintended consequence of this countermyth was to place women who are violent outside the bounds of female normalcy, as perverse or unnatural. I think all movements that are attempting to lift people from oppression have to allow for people that have been harmed by life in ways that don't make them nice.

**MS:** One of the book's strengths is how you show, with narratives about the characters who started this movement and their successors, the difference between the radical, driven urges that are required to begin a movement, and what's required to maintain the new ground gained. Those who begin are brave and slightly batty, while those who follow to clean up the messes left behind are more like bureaucrats. That story is especially well told with your history of women's shelters.

Your third myth, then, is that the home is a sanctuary for the frail and weak, while the countermyth is that the home is actually the locale of most violence against women, and confidentially located shelters are her only refuge.

**JH:** One of the ways the movement has intervened in cultural narratives has been to subvert the view of the family as a secure sanctuary within a frightening world. Traditional patriarchal narratives cast the home as a refuge for women, with man at the threshold protecting the woman from the wolves at the door. Feminists turned this portrayal of home as sanctuary inside out, showing how the family was the real danger zone for women. The argument that more women are killed in their homes than on the streets drew on this rhetorical strategy of the battered women's movement.

The story of the battered wife operated as a cautionary tale as women began to enter the workforce and public life in greater numbers. This rallying cry – that more women are killed in their homes than on the streets – became very important in justifying the exodus of married women from the family. And casting sisterhood in the position of the true protector of women, with feminists spiriting abused women to secret locations,

represented a very different denouement to the story. Rather than the valiant hero saving the helpless maiden from a brute, women came together to form places of sanctuary and rescue strategies through the power of sisterhood.

But I show in *Hard Knocks* how the drama of taking flight from abuse, along with various feminist rescue strategies, overtook the movement as the most captivating narrative. In many ways the shelter movement took up the romantic narrative of the family as a refuge for women in a dangerous world.

Actually, this notion that women have to be spirited away to secret shelters because they're at so much risk of men hunting them down and engaging in violence does not have empirical support. When we did a study of shelters in the U.S.A., there were no more reported incidents of violence in open shelters (public shelters) than in private, or hidden, shelters. So, I became interested in what other purposes are served by spiriting women away to secret locations. We don't do that when children are assaulted, or when there is a shooting at schools. We don't put children into hidden locations.

**MS:** Jan, where are we now? This movement's wayward but dramatic progress – the myths, countermyths, these readjustments, this dialectical lurching forward – has changed the way everybody thinks about domestic life: from the Americas to Europe and the Middle East. But do you see problems now with the state's largely uncritical acceptance of the ideas initially put forth by the movement against domestic violence?

**JH:** Reliance on the police has become increasingly worrisome. Without a doubt, this reliance has been part of the movement's success: it's a kind of a law-and-order feminism. It's true that people have the right to call in the police and be safe in their own homes. But it's been a very costly strategy, working so hand in glove with the police. It has led to neglect of other community partnerships and of alliances with progressive causes, but there are some creative campaigns to reclaim the radical roots of the movement that also are taken up in the book. **CP**

**Michael Snedeker** is a defense attorney and author of *Down in the Valley*. He can be reached at: [mike.snedeker@gmail.com](mailto:mike.snedeker@gmail.com)

## Censorship in Japan: The Fukushima Cover-up

By Richard Wilcox

**T**wenty years ago, when I first arrived in Japan, I taught English to a Tokyo University associate professor in engineering. The young and normally reserved man sometimes complained about his boss, who was a professor in nuclear engineering and gave him troublesome tasks at the office. I once asked him what he thought about earthquake-prone Japan using nuclear power, and he replied, "It's crazy." Of course, Tokyo University is the hub of Japan's nuclear power industry and most executives for the Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO) are graduates (as are many top politicians) from Japan's most elite university.

Today, "four out of five Japanese want to see Tokyo abandon nuclear power in the wake of the Fukushima atomic crisis," according to *Nuclear Power Daily*. But any employee in government or media would have no chance of career advancement if they spoke out against nuclear power. This problem is well documented in an article from *Der Spiegel*, the German news magazine, which details the insidious and poisonous nuclear tentacles that penetrate the most important aspects of Japanese society.

As a recent Japanese news editorial points out, a small cabal of criminals think they literally own the country, and will not allow democracy or the free market to interfere with their aims to control the energy system:

"[I]n adopting a scheme for paying damages to the victims of the accidents at Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant, the government has ended up guaranteeing the survival of Tokyo Electric Power Co., the operator of the stricken plant. Radioactive substances from TEPCO's Fukushima No. 1 plant have contaminated surrounding cities, farms, forests and the ocean. ...

"The federation's staunch opposition to separation of generation and transmission was shown in its rejection of adoption of the 'Smart Grid' system that the

U.S. is eager to promote – an electricity network that can efficiently and stably deliver electricity supplies by intelligently integrating the behavior of power generation entities and power users. The federation quibbled, saying the Japanese transmission system was ‘already smart enough.’ It fears that the Smart Grid might open the way for outsiders to enter the electricity market, thus breaking the monopoly of the nation’s 10 utilities. ...

“The power industry is also reluctant to build facilities to change the frequency of the alternating currents, so that electricity generated in the western half of the country, where electricity’s frequency is 60 hertz, can be transmitted to the eastern half of Japan, where electricity’s frequency is 50 hertz, or vice versa – even though such interchangeability would inevitably reduce regional imbalances of supply. ... This reluctance is based on a fear that the interchangeability issue may strengthen the argument for separation of power generation and transmission.” (*Japan Times*.)

Just over a decade ago, I attended a press conference on the dangers of Japan’s nuclear power stations, which was held at the Foreign Correspondents Club in Tokyo. It was well attended because of the deadly Tokaimura nuclear accident, which had just occurred in 1999. An audience member asked Kenji Higuchi – a journalist and teacher who has written several books about the dangers of nuclear power – why a documentary film about him and the dangers to Japan’s nuke workers, *Nuclear Ginza*, was not allowed to be shown on Japan’s government news station, NHK. “It was squashed from the top down,” he said. I have shown the film many times over the years to my university students, but I can’t reach millions of people.

Fast forward to June of 2011, when Higuchi gave a lecture at a small but prestigious college in Tokyo. One conscientious Japanese professor at that college has been alerting his students to the nuke issue and promoting Higuchi’s books. My contact, who attended the meeting of only 10 people, said that it was Higuchi’s belief that he was not allowed a larger venue because he is too direct in his speaking manner and names the companies that are complicit with the Nuclear Industry. The student’s parents who work for some of those companies might not like hearing such bold criticisms. Higuchi

also surmised that the government has implicitly threatened universities not to touch on the nuclear issue in any critical way, such as allowing anti-nuke rallies on their campuses.

I teach part time at this particular college and have freely published many articles there, but for the first time my submission, which was to be on the nuke disaster, was turned down because the issue was deemed “too sensitive.” It is noteworthy that one of the more academically open, meaty and progressive-minded schools in Tokyo is now telling people to keep their mouths shut. When I wrote a reply to the editor, asking that if I would submit to peer review would they still consider my article, I received no response.

At another school, which has an elite science and engineering department, my first-year students have responded well to my cynical jokes about nuclear power. When I open the windows in the morning and say, “Hey, let’s let in the fresh air and radiation, it’s good for you,” everyone nervously chuckles while shaking their heads. The students provide very sensible and conscientiously written comments to the articles I give them to read about the nuclear situation.

On the other hand, by second year many students realize that, if they are in certain fields of study, it will not do well for their careers to criticize nuclear power. When we had discussions about energy issues, many gave articulate defenses of the various forms in which alternative energies are available and how they should be developed – but, in the end, some groups said, “but we still think nuclear is the best!”

There is another aspect to this problem: it is simply “air headedness.” When choosing topics for presentations, some groups came up with the uninspiring and disputatious topic of “global warming,” while others choose “beer,” “chocolate,” “television,” and so on. Not real substantive stuff. One teacher suggested to me the reason many students do not want to think about Fukushima is because Japan previously considered itself superior to its neighbors and has now taken it on the chin. This is a sore subject for Japanese pride, and Fukushima was a rude awakening reminding Japanese that they are merely human after all.

The censorship of critics of the nuke industry can be seen at all levels. For ex-

ample, even “[a] government official who released a book on May 20 criticizing the government’s response to the Fukushima nuclear disaster has been asked to leave his post. ... [Mr.] Koga has ... pushed for changes to the country’s energy policy, such as a separation of electric power generation and transmission fiercely opposed by power companies...” Obviously, this fellow was looking for an early retirement and was “asked” to leave his prestigious career for telling the truth.

In the meantime, as the Fukushima nuclear reactors which have had “corium” meltdowns continue to irradiate the nearby environment – which ultimately puts all of Japan’s inhabitants in danger – we are being told to “forget about it and go back to sleep.” Yet, we can see many hopeful signs of concerned citizens nationwide, organizing to address the dangers of spreading radiation and to eventually put an end to nuclear power generation in Japan. CP

**Richard Wilcox** lives in Japan. He can be reached at wilcoxrb99@ybb.ne.jp.

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#### LAWRENCE CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

porters of the law say it’s a response to the failure of the federal government to aggressively enforce existing laws against illegal immigration. They say this is leaving native-born Alabamans vulnerable to job and educational competition from illegal immigrants, whose numbers, as in many parts of the Deep South, have skyrocketed in recent years, outpacing the growth rate in traditional “gateway” states like New York and California. But there’s little evidence, in fact, that most of the dirty and sometimes dangerous jobs immigrants are taking – in farming or poultry processing, for example – are ones that native-born Alabamans would want, or that illegal immigrants are in a position, financially or otherwise, to finish high school, let alone to go to college.

Critics say these issues are just convenient distractions. HB 56, if passed, will drive hundreds of thousands of badly needed workers out of the state, harming local businesses and the state’s economy, just as Arizona’s law and similar laws elsewhere have. And the measure is unconstitutional, they say,

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since it “usurps” the federal government’s supreme authority to make and enforce the nation’s immigration laws.

Even worse, perhaps, it threatens to turn Alabama employers, landlords, school principals, and even ordinary good Samaritans into the functional equivalent of immigration cops – creating something resembling a police state not only for the estimated 150,000 illegal immigrants thought to be in the state, but for thousands of ordinary legal residents, including U.S. citizens, whose lives could be affected by such an all-encompassing dragnet. It’s what brings back memories of Jim Crow, when Alabama enforced second-class status on blacks in every public institution, fomenting ethnic and racial hatred and creating a *de facto* apartheid system.

Despite its breath-taking scope, it turns out that HB 56 is not entirely original. Most of its key provisions are drawn from controversial measures like Arizona’s SB 1070, which allows state police to inquire broadly about the legal status of persons, suspected to be in the country illegally. HB 56 also mimics a South Carolina law that bars

illegal immigrants from attending that state’s public universities.

The most “original” part of the law – the illegal immigrant school census – is likely to generate the most controversy, because it comes so close to impinging on the spirit of a 1982 Supreme Court decision, *Plyler v. Doe*, that guarantees all children access to a public school education, regardless of their legal status. HB 56’s supporters say the census isn’t intended to kick illegal immigrants out of school: it just allows the state to estimate the cost burden of schooling illegal immigrants, ostensibly for “planning purposes.”

But critics scoff at that rationale, saying a “census” – really, just a polite term for an interrogation of schoolchildren by public authorities – will have a chilling effect. It will discourage illegal immigrant parents from sending their children to school, and could easily end up being used to target the families for deportation, since their home and work addresses and contact information would become readily available to law enforcement authorities.

Will HB 56 actually work? The evi-

dence suggests that few of these state crackdown laws are actually fulfilling their stated objectives. Under Arizona’s LAVA, recently upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court, for example, few businesses are being investigated for hiring illegal immigrants and most aren’t even using the E-Verify federal database, according to published reports. And many police departments are skeptical that targeting illegal immigrants does anything other than divert their officers from day-to-day crime-fighting – while making illegal immigrants much less willing to cooperate in those efforts.

In Alabama’s segregated Latino barrios, they’ve started calling that “Jaime Cuervo” – or Jim Crow, in Spanish. Democrats better figure out a way to combat the campaign against illegal immigrants with more than just rhetoric, or, come November 2012, they may be eating crow themselves. **CP**

**Stewart J. Lawrence** is a Washington, D.C.-based an immigration policy specialist. He can be reached at [stewartlawrence81147@gmail.com](mailto:stewartlawrence81147@gmail.com)