

# CounterPunch

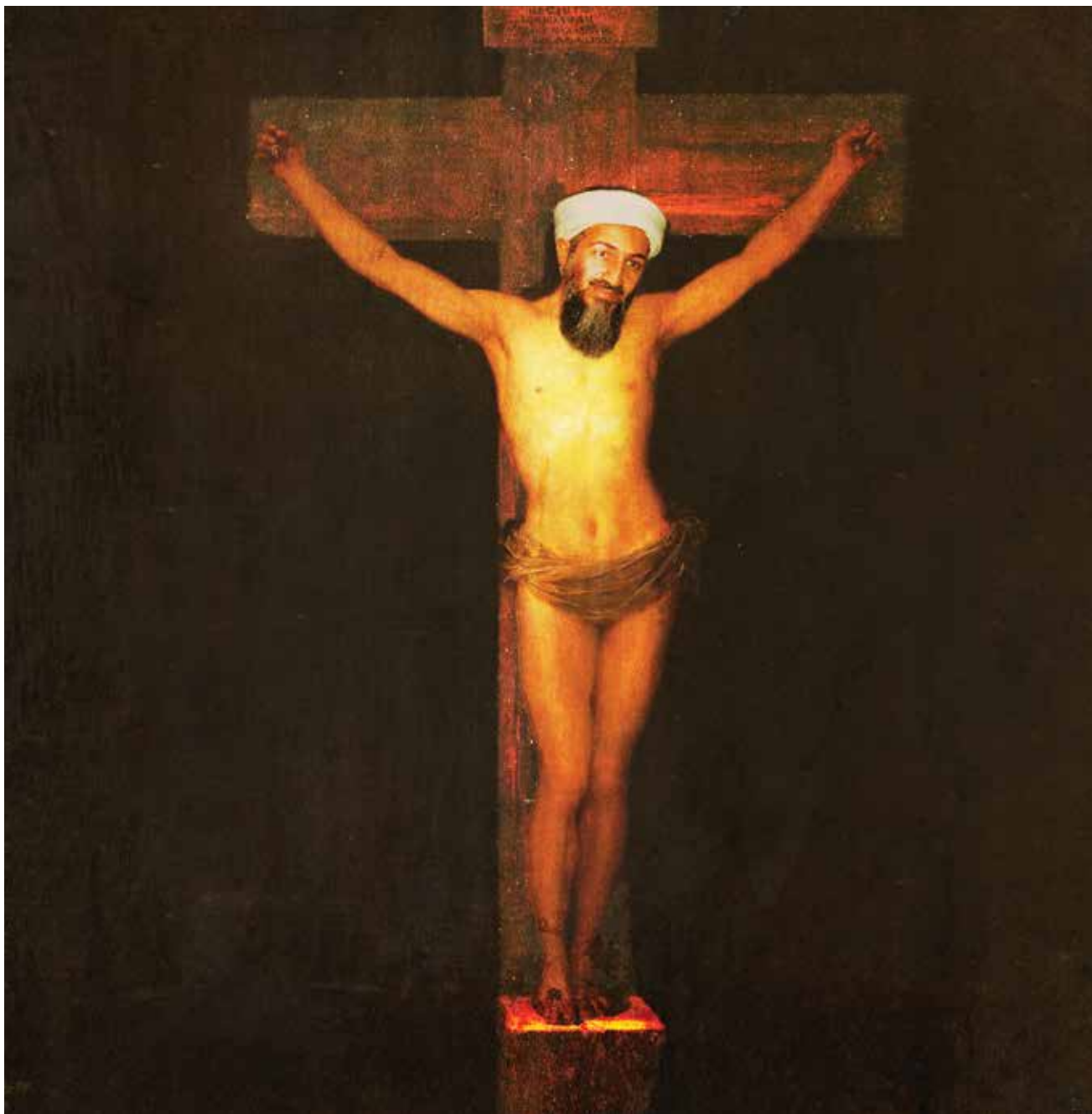
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HOLLYWOOD'S YEAR OF LIVING CLANDESTINELY BY ED RAMPPELL

INSIDE AMERICA'S CONTROL UNIT PRISONS BY NANCY KURSHAN

A LOOK AT MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL'S EXTRAORDINARY LABOR HISTORY BY DAVID MACARAY

CHASING HELL WITH WILLIAM FRIEDKIN BY KIM NICOLINI



# CounterPunch

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IN MEMORY OF  
Alexander Cockburn  
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The Martyrdom of Bin Laden  
(After Goya) by Nick Roney**



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# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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## The Enemy Within

The enemy is within... what is our driving force to armamentarianism? Maybe Stansfield Smith is not old enough to remember Eisenhower's State of the Union : the enemy is within, our own military industrial complex...is the greatest enemy we have to world peace...just keep moving our little war fomenting program all over the world globe.

*M. Dillon, MD*

## Bono Exposed

I am 72 years old, a college graduate, a former Army Intelligence officer, and a career Paramedic-Firefighter. Dave Marsh's essay on Bono is one of the best articles I have ever read.

*Carol J. Hounshell, Florida*

## Goodness Gracious

Dear People,  
As a retired philosophy instructor, it was with great pleasure I read Chris Floyd's recent article, This is Not the Age of Defeat, in the March issue of CounterPunch. It is the rare occasion when serious attention is paid human values, as as the concept of "goodness", which Floyd discusses. We live in a society where it is only the result, the consequence, the product, the profit that counts. Values are not seen as a "practical" guide for our actions, and for the most part are consigned to

church, temple, and commencement speech exercises. In those venues, they are voiced as a substitute for the human need to live a meaningful life that is possible only when human values such as goodness, justice, truth, etc... guide our actions prior to considerations of consequence. And Floyd is absolutely correct, values such as goodness may "lose," but can never be "defeated." They are intrinsic in what it is to be human. If we learned nothing else from Emmanuel Kant, we learned that.

*Sincerely,  
Terrence M Breshahan*

## Poppies for a Purpose

Julien Mercille's article basically bought into the war on drugs. As one who has done very hard physical work all my life, I have been left with much pain from arthritis. Opiate based medication is the most effective and safest in very small doses. I am not looked at by doctors as some kind of junkie, when I ask for a prescriptions. A better use of Aghanistan poppy "problem" would be to advocate for medicinal, legal crop production. The anti-depressive cymbalta is now being prescribed for pain. The dangers, and withdrawals from this stuff even makes meth look like a cake walk. Thanks to do gooders both "liberal" and "conservative" I get to tough it out for the rest of my life,

as I still work after "retirement" out of necessity. I still do physical work.

*Denis Leigh*

## Saving Face

Dear CounterPunch,  
Try to imagine my bewilderment and consternation as I glanced at the letters to the editor in Feb's CounterPunch I received last week. Look at the names: David A. Stockman, Neil Harris, Oliver Stone and Chuck Spinney... Do you really think Oliver Stone has the intellectual clout to be on the same page as Stockman, Spinney and myself? I mean the guy's a conspiracy nut! JFK was full of fabrication.

I hope you're happy! Now I'm going to be the laughing stock of Beardstown over this! How will I show my face at the melon-market or the fish-market? Woe is me?

Seriously though, it was really a surprise and a great honor to see my name in CounterPunch which I've learned so much from. I think when I wrote that letter CounterPunch was still on old format without letters to the editor, so I would've cleaned the letter up a bit had I known it might have been printed. Anyway, I'll probably get the February issue framed

*Sincerely,  
Neil J. Harris*

## Cronies

Thank you! My CounterPunch actually came the month indicated on the cover. The review "Nanook of the North Revisited had great meaning. I knew Francis Flaherty in our anti-nuclear war activist days in the 1960s. There was never such a gentler person.

*Catherine Meninger, NH*

## Hello From the Corn State

Your change of format to that of a magazine is wonderful. Knowing that your readership attracts a certain type of individual...well, aside from the congenitally-insecure types motivated by an all-consuming paranoia to keep tabs on America's demons - who would benefit your reader letters addition. The March edition was especially enjoyed. What a fantastic cover! The article by Floyd left me with the impression of just having had a conversation with myself - with literary improvements tossed in.

*Alan Maximuk*

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## ROAMING CHARGES

# Constitutional Entropy

BY JEFFREY ST. CLAIR

It is a somber measure of the accelerating pace of constitutional entropy in America that Alan Dershowitz, that avid advocate of torture, strutted forth as one of the few voices of restraint following the capture of young Dzhokhar Tsarnaev. When most commentators were making carnivorous howls for the bullet-ridden teenager to be stripped of his constitutional rights and declared an enemy combatant, Dershowitz, who has previously endorsed waterboarding suspected terrorists under the outlandish “ticking time-bomb” theory, urged the Obama administration to treat Tsarnaev as an ordinary criminal suspect, read him his Miranda rights and provide him access to an attorney.

This sensible legal advice, which is regularly used in cases involving mass murderers, serial killers and abortion clinic bombers, was steamrolled by Eric Holder’s Justice Department as it rushed to invoke an “emergency exception” to abrogate Tsarnaev’s rights under the Fifth Amendment.

Citing only the most tenuous thread of legal authority, federal prosecutors and military interrogators subjected Dzhokhar Tsarnaev to sixteen hours of questioning, while he was cuffed to his hospital bed in the Intensive Care Unit. This sordid treatment was rationalized through the so-called Quarles Exemption, which derives from a 1984 Supreme Court case where New York police questioned an unarmed suspect in a rape case about a missing gun without advising him of his rights. Quarles soon pointed the police toward the weapon. Ironically, prosecutors chose not to charge Quarles with rape, but did try and convict him on gun charges, which he had essentially confessed to while in police custody. The cops later lamely cited an immedi-

ate risk to public safety as the reason for not issuing Quarles a Miranda warning. That case was the subject of a scorching dissent by Justice Thurgood Marshall, who wrote that the ruling “endorsed the introduction of coerced self-incriminating statements in criminal prosecutions.”

Since 2010, the Obama administration has mounted an assiduous assault on the Fifth Amendment by boring even larger holes in Miranda protections. The first major blow was struck in the interrogation of the Times Square bombing suspect Faisal Shahzad. Like Tsarnaev, Shahzad was an American citizen. Like Tsarnaev, Shazad was detained and grilled for hours before being read his rights and offered an attorney. After softening up Shazad through the initial interrogation, the Times Square bomber eventually waived his rights and continued to blab away to the FBI about the logistics of his failed plot.

Sensing the keen prosecutorial advantages of this strategy, Holder sent a memo to the FBI in March of 2011 urging federal criminal interrogators to invoke the Quarles exception in domestic terrorism cases, using the rule to aggressively probe for information well beyond looming threats to public safety: “There may be exceptional cases in which, although all relevant public safety questions have been asked, agents nonetheless conclude that continued unwarned interrogation is necessary to collect valuable and timely intelligence not related to any immediate threat, and that the government’s interest in obtaining this intelligence outweighs the disadvantages of proceeding with unwarned interrogation.”

So the stage was set for the wide-ranging Tsarnaev interrogation. Over

the course of more than two days, federal agents from the High Value Detainee Interrogation Group queried Tsarnaev, who was suffering from bullet wounds to his head, neck and legs, about every aspect of the bomb plot, about his family, his friends, his finances and his political and religious beliefs. Ignoring Tsarnaev’s repeated requests for a lawyer, the inquisitors duly extracted a full confession from the young man and selectively leaked some of his most incriminating statements to the press, so that even if a court eventually rules his pre-Miranda confession inadmissible at trial, the contents will already have been seared indelibly on the minds of potential jurors.

Even this sinister suspension of bedrock legal rights that reach back to the Magna Carta wasn’t enough to satiate the terror-hawks. The congressional warlords, odious figures like Lindsay Graham and Peter King, launched a frantic scramble to exploit the bombing by calling for expanded police and surveillance powers. Of course, this means fresh financial opportunities for the Homeland Security Complex, that ravaging clique of contractors who are feasting at the trough of America’s last growth industry.

In the wake of the bombings, Boston itself became a vast panorama of paranoia. Police entered homes without warrants, detained citizens without probable cause, shut down sprawling neighborhoods in a spastic search for a lone, seriously wounded teen. Over a single night, the cradle of our revolution became fully pacified, docile, willing to offer up the most cherished liberties of the Republic without even being asked.

We’ve reached the end of something vital in America. The instruments of social control have become deeply internalized and the psychological conditioning at work no longer requires siege sirens or color-coded alerts. Now entire cities reflexively obey the dictates of authority and are snugly sequestered behind cordons of the mind. **CP**



## GRASPING AT STRAWS

# How the Banks Targeted Blacks

BY MIKE WHITNEY

Race played a bigger role in the financial crisis than most people realize. The fact is, blacks and Hispanics were disproportionately targeted by the nation's biggest lenders in the subprime ripoff. The number of people who were fleeced in this banker's scam is staggering.

According to Pat Garofalo at Think Progress "nearly half of black borrowers and more than one-third of Hispanic borrowers received high-price loans," while the percentage of white borrowers was less than 17 percent. Clearly, the banks had a plan and that plan involved taking minorities to the cleaners.

In 2012, Wells Fargo agreed to pay \$175 million to settle accusations that its "brokers discriminated against black and Hispanic borrowers during the housing boom." Predictably, the bank admitted no wrongdoing, but agreed to pay the fine because—in the words of Mike Heid, president of Wells Fargo Home Mortgage, "We believe it is in the best interest of our team members, customers, communities and investors to avoid a long and costly legal fight..." Sure, it's all for the good of the community.

Bank of America settled a similar Justice Department case in 2011 in the amount of \$335 million, the largest fair-lending settlement in the DOJ's history. As expected, BofA admitted no wrongdoing although its subsidiary, Countrywide Financial, had clearly steered non-white loan applicants to higher-cost subprime mortgages. Following the announcement of the settlement, Attorney General Eric Holder issued a statement:

"These institutions should make judgments based on applicants' credit

worthiness, not on the color of their skin. With today's settlement, the federal government will ensure that the more than 200,000 African-American and Hispanic borrowers who were discriminated against by Countrywide will be entitled to compensation."

Hogwash. Not one bank executive has faced prosecution for the criminal activity that precipitated the Great Crash of '08. Besides, Holder's settlement is chickenfeed. By my calculations, the \$335 million sum would award each victim a measly \$167 for their trouble, barely enough for a week's rent in a fleabag hotel. Many of these people lost their homes to foreclosure. Are they supposed to go buy another house for 167 bucks?

Keep in mind, that subprime loans were originally concocted to provide credit for high-risk borrowers. There's no reason why people with spotty credit shouldn't be able to borrow money provided the interest rate factors in higher losses on the loans.

But the subprimes that were issued between 2005 to 2007 had nothing to do with a borrower's ability to repay. These toxic mortgages were designed to rip people off, pure and simple. Many of them beefed up closing costs, concealed prepayment penalties, or featured seductive "teaser" rates that rose sharply a few years later, increasing the probability of default. In other words, subprime mortgages were loaded with tricks and traps that were aimed at taking advantage of unsophisticated borrowers.

Subprime mortgages—vintage 2004 to 2006—were designed to blow up. During that period, subprimes represented a full 20% of all originations and topped \$1.5 trillion in aggregate

value. As everyone knows by now, the loans were bundled into bonds with other mortgages and sold to investors regardless of the quality of the underlying loans. What the banks cared about was quantity, not quality. By the third quarter of 2007, subprime ARMs making up only 7 percent of all US mortgages accounted for nearly half of all foreclosures. And, by 2008, 25 percent of subprimes were in some stage of foreclosure. Like we said, these turkeys were made to blow up and blow up they did. Naturally, the bankers and brokers didn't give a rip because the bonus checks had already been cashed and the money was safely squirreled away in offshore accounts.

Many subprime borrowers, who had bought homes "in stable middle-income communities," lost them to foreclosure forcing the borrowers "to return to isolated and poorer ghettos." So the subprime debacle actually helped to turn back the clock and re-segregate entire neighborhoods.

At the same time, the ensuing recession delivered the knockout punch in terms of high unemployment and lost wealth. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the current unemployment rate is 7.5 percent, but among blacks and Hispanics the rate is much higher, 14 percent and 12 percent respectively. And, among black youth (18-29 years old) it's higher still, 20.4 percent.

Also, the 5-year slump has widened the wealth gap into a gaping chasm. According to CNN: "White Americans have 22 times more wealth than blacks—a gap that nearly doubled during the Great Recession.... (Minorities) saw their median household net worth fall by roughly 60% between 2005 and 2010."

A "60 percent loss in household net worth", and things have only gotten worse since the recession ended.

The victims of Wall Street's predatory lending spree are still waiting for justice. Unfortunately, Obama hasn't lifted a finger to help them. **CP**



## EMPIRE BURLESQUE

# The UK's Far-Right Breakout

BY CHRIS FLOYD

This month began with a political explosion in Britain. No, it was not a May Day outpouring of the outraged masses, taking to the streets at last in fierce denunciation of the draconian, society-shredding austerity policies that have been imposed upon them by a repugnant coalition of upper-class twits. It was instead the stunning rise of Blighty's own version of the Tea Party: a short, sharp shock that instantly transformed the country's political landscape—and sent its three 'mainstream' parties scurrying to the right.

We speak, of course, of the upsurge by UKIP—the UK Independence Party. Long an obscure gaggle of fringe-dwellers devoted to immigrant-bashing and Europe-trashing, the right-wing party outstripped all predictions and seized almost a quarter of the electorate in local elections in England and Wales on May 2. (If that doesn't sound like a lot, consider that the "winners"—the bowl of limp noodles known laughingly as the Labour Party—polled only 29 percent.) Immediately after the vote count, we saw a parade of 'major' party grandees stampeding to the microphones to declare that they 'get it' and pledging to trim their sails to the prevailing winds of uninformed prejudice and fear that swept UKIP to new heights.

UKIP's hard-core crankery has been obscured by the affable, even goofy demeanor cultivated by its front-man, Nigel Farage. A constant presence on TV gabfests and comedy shows with his "What-me-worry?" rictus, Farage plays the genial English Everyman: the bluff but goodhearted bloke who likes to hoist a few down the pub, while letting off steam about bureaucrats, Eurocrats, foreigners, feminists, welfare scroungers and "political correctness

gone mad." A harmless old duffer, really, the salt of the earth: "one of us."

So said multitudes of the English yeomanry—the former middle-class Tories and disaffected working class whites who formed the heart of the UKIP surge. Naturally, it should go without saying that Farage is not really "one of them": he's a privately-educated commodities broker and international banker who has spent much of his career with—gasp!—French financial firms. He's been making good money with Johnny Foreigner for years, even as he heaps coals on Europe as the primal evil bedeviling England's green and pleasant land. But such hypocrisy—the well-greased, well-connected insider posing as plain-folk outsider—is practically *de rigueur* for your Astroturf populist these days; as we have seen, glaringly, with America's corporate-sponsored, oligarch-directed Tea Party movement.

No political or cultural comparison is exact, of course. For example, UKIP—though chockfull of nuts (antisemites, homophobes, Islamophobes, racists, refugees from fractured fascist parties, etc.)—lacks the fanatical religious element characteristic of the Tea Party. (You'd have to look to Tony Blair for that kind of thing in British politics.) But there *is* one other salient transatlantic resonance at work: the utter failure of the Limp Noodle Party and other 'leftists' to capitalize on the genuine, widespread pain that has been gleefully inflicted on ordinary Britons by the much-loathed coalition government led by the Tories.

The Conservatives didn't win a majority in the last national election but have nonetheless instigated a radical, root-and-branch transformation of British society, seeking to tear out the

roots of the post-war social compact that had brought unprecedented levels of equality and opportunity to Britain's historically harsh, rigid class system. The recently late and much-unlamented Margaret Thatcher began this assault more than 30 years ago—again, paralleling similar developments in the United States—but the blunderbuss approach of the current crop of twits at the top makes Thatcher look like Franklin Roosevelt in comparison. They are literally snatching the mite from the widow and the orphan, forcing the severely disabled back to work, stealthily and steadily replacing the beloved National Health Service with an American-style, profit-gouging healthcare system, slashing support for abused women, hungry children, the sick, the poor and working people at every level—all of this while pushing 'Shock Doctrine' economic policies that create no jobs, sustain no economic growth and benefit no one but a few cronies and corporate interests. Shops are shuttered, people are suffering, communities are dying, inequality is growing, dissatisfaction with the system is rife.

Here is a wide-open door for a party—especially one that claims to speak in the name of working people—to articulate a powerful alternative vision to the obvious failures of austerity and elitism. But Labour—led by feckless, clueless technocrats—can't walk through that door. The party offers nothing but Obama-style blather about "deficit reduction" and "getting tough" on immigration and cutting entitlements, while suggesting only the most tepid, toothless 'reforms' of a turbo-capitalism that has gutted the country.

"Where there is no vision, the people perish." Or, in this case, they vote for a gaggle of cranks who reflect—and enshrine—their nation's worst instincts. The UKIP outbreak is just the latest manifestation of a grim trend in global democracy: the far right seizing fertile ground for dissent from a corrupt, co-opted, clapped-out left. **CB**



DAYDREAM NATION

## The Needle and the Damage Done

BY KRISTIN KOLB

My favorite Neil Young song—aside from “Revolution Blues”—is “The Needle and the Damage Done.” Alone and acoustic, Young describes friends erased by disease and degradation. “I’ve seen the needle and the damage done, a little part of it in everyone. But every junkie’s like a setting sun.”

In Buddhism, the “junkie” is the Hungry Ghost, trapped in the Third of the Six Realms of Existence. The specter is pale and emaciated, with a bloated belly, neck long and thin, and a mouth the size of the eye of a needle. A rumbling stomach demands more, but no replenishing repast is possible. What can pass through the eye of a needle? The craving continues, be it heroin, food, love, money, image, sex.

Gabor Mate, a physician who attends to the most despondent drug addicts of Vancouver, BC, wrote a book about his experiences, *In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts*. His clinic is located in the downtown eastside neighborhood—the most notorious in Canada for its decay. A decade ago, a serial killer preyed upon the women bartering sex for money and drugs on the street corner of Hastings and Main, then buried their bodies on his pig farm.

Hastings and Main is a ghost world. I can attest, as I walked through the neighborhood on the way to work when I lived in Vancouver during the days of the killing fields. In his book, Mate twists the typical annals of the addict. He confronts his own purchasing of classical music, confessing to throwing thousands of dollars a month at CDs, mindless consumption to fill up the hole that that stress shot into him.

“The difference between passion and addiction,” Mate says, “is that between a divine spark and one that incinerates.”

Incineration. Such was the case in Bangladesh on April 24, when the Phantom Tac sweatshop collapsed upon its workers, eventually catching fire. As of this writing, the death count is almost 1000—and rising daily. The Phantom workers are burnt and buried among the sewing needles that stitched our clothing. Vijay Prashad eloquently described the scene for *CounterPunch*. The news left me in a state of “*la nausée*,” as Sartre coined.

The next day, as the story broke, the *New York Times* published a clever little bit of inconsequential matter titled, “Haute Punk: Chaos to Couture.” Apparently, the crapper at the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s Costume Institute overflowed into a new exhibit. And where else—on Manhattan’s Fifth Avenue—that’s serious couture country.

The *Times* reported: “We’re trying to highlight the more intellectual, artistic side of punk,” said Andrew Bolton, the curator of the exhibition. Organizers hope to draw a parallel between the populist, DIY punk aesthetic and the individualized vision of rarefied designers.”

In a fun gender swap, the Met purchased mannequins of strung-out, needle-thin boys. Their measurements, the *Times* elaborated, are a carefully determined 34-inch chest and 28-inch waist. Well, at least the hungry and ghostly plastic punk doesn’t have to contort into Barbie’s severe restraints.

Of course, there’s the reconstructed “fabled toilet” of CBGB. Duchamp would be so flattered. And an installation with “a syringe or two”—a modicum of repast for those dope-sick mannequins.

Nostalgic Blondie emerges fashion-

tippy in the dregs of the article to recant the DIY of haute-y couture. “I almost got thrown off a bus once for wearing my underwear,” she recalled. “The bus driver screamed at me. I had on little orange satiny pink tap pants... It just felt right. It looked hot.”

“All That’s Fit to Print,” indeed.

Among the designers worshipped in the exhibit are Chanel and Dior—both implicated for using sweatshop labor. One fashionista, Gareth Pugh, who dressed his Met models in trash bags, is peculiarly self-immolating. He told the venerable *Icon* magazine, “I am my own sweatshop.” Pugh elaborates about the hard times a young fashion designer endures to the utterly addictive *Vice.com*—which lauds itself as “The Definitive Guide to Enlightening Information.” Pugh: “I think it’s like Alcoholics Anonymous: Take every day as it comes.”

As for our addiction to the needle, I certainly have no answers. Although Barbara Ehrenreich, Facebooking about the news, called for “mass nude protests.” I don’t think we can quell an omnipresent craving, as the Left champions, via boycotts, cheekily naked or otherwise.

Vijay Prashad, writing for *The Guardian*, warns boycotts aren’t the miracle cure. He thinks we must ask our lawmakers to support attempts to organize the industry.

I hate to be nihilistic. Maybe, in honor of Pugh’s personal sweatshop problems, we could consign the clothing industry—and ourselves—plastic tokens, à la A.A., to assure our clothes are “clean” and we’re on the road to recovery, one day at a time. “Here’s your 30-day coin. Congratulations.” **CP**



# The Military-Industrial-Intelligence-Entertainment Complex: Hollywood's Year of Living Clandestinely

BY ED RAMPELL

Intelligence agencies were ready for their close-up in 2012. Featuring action, intrigue, exotic locales, gadgetry and sex, spy thrillers have been a popular film genre since silent pictures like Fritz Lang's 1928 "Spies" and early talkies, including Alfred Hitchcock's 1930s' "The 39 Steps" and "Secret Agent." However, never before in Hollywood history have productions about covert operations been lauded with such prominence, prestigious prizes. 2012's embarrassment of Emmy, Golden Globe and Oscar riches include:

Showtime's War on Terror series "Homeland"—about a brainwashed Marine who returns from Iraq as part of an Islamist conspiracy to assassinate U.S. leaders—was nominated for nine Primetime Emmys, winning six, including for Outstanding Drama Series, writing plus acting awards for Claire Danes and Damian Lewis. Their performances also scored Golden Globes, while "Homeland" won the Best Television Series - Drama Globe.

As 2012 was the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first James Bond feature—1962's "Dr. No"—007 movies were hailed during the 85<sup>th</sup> annual Academy Awards ceremony. A montage featuring Sean Connery, Roger Moore, etc., from 23 Bond flicks aired during the Feb. 24, 2013 telecast. Shirley Bassey reprised her "Goldfinger" song. The new 007 blockbuster, "Skyfall", was nominated for five Oscars, scoring two: For sound editing and Adele's theme song (which she'd previously won a Globe for and performed during the broadcast). "Skyfall" won more Oscars than any previous Bond flick, earning as many as Steven Spielberg's "Lincoln."

"The Gatekeepers", which interviews Shin Bet's ex-chiefs, was nominated for the Best Documentary Oscar. Dror Moreh's film was widely touted by liberals and won four critics' and peace awards because Israel's internal intelligence service heads all endorse ending Israel's West Bank and Gaza occupations. "The Gatekeepers" also hypes espionage tradecraft, from high-tech surveillance to targeted assassination, with daunting displays of Israeli intel's lethal prowess.

"Zero Dark Thirty", which dramatized the CIA/Navy SEAL hunt for Osama bin Laden, received five Oscar and four Globe noms. The Hollywood Foreign Press Association nominated "Zero" in directing, writing and Best Motion Picture categories, awarding Jessica Chastain a Best Performance Globe. However, Chastain and fellow nominee screenwriter Mark Boal failed to strike Oscar gold. The production also failed to win for Best Picture, picking up only a Sound Editing Oscar (tying with "Skyfall").

A week before the Oscar ceremony activists demonstrat-

ed in Hollywood, denouncing "Zero" as pro-torture, likening director Kathryn Bigelow to Hitler's favorite filmmaker, Leni Riefenstahl. In 1929 German star Emil Jannings became the first Best Actor Oscar winner; in 1941 Nazi Minister of Propaganda Joseph Goebbels pulled a P.R. coup, naming Jannings—who'd left Tinseltown, returning to the Third Reich—"Artist of the State." But it's unlikely the cunning Goebbels could have surpassed the stage managed crowning achievement of Hollywood's year of living clandestinely.

The coup de grace of heaping laurels upon the brows of 2012 spy-fi occurred at the end of the Academy Awards, with a breathtakingly brazen propagandistic act totally unparalleled in Oscar's annals: Ergo, "Argo", an ersatz adventure pic celebrating CIA rescuers of Americans hiding in Iran, nominated for five Globes and seven Academy Awards.

On Jan. 13, 2013 the HFPA awarded Ben Affleck its Best Director honor and "Argo" the Globe for Best Motion Picture - Drama. This foreshadowed La-La-Land's strangest salute to screen spies. During the Feb. 24 Oscar telecast "Argo" won an editing award and Chris Terrio for Best Writing. Then, amidst the Hollywood hullabaloo, the most bizarre ballyhooing in Motion Picture Academy of Arts and Sciences history took place, turning the show's venue into the Dolby Theatre of the absurd. As Jack Nicholson went onstage to present the Best Motion Picture Oscar the live telecast cut from Hollywood to Washington. Via satellite transmission Michelle Obama appeared to reveal the winner from the White House's Diplomatic Reception Room, surrounded by uniformed military personnel.

*Never* has a member of the First Family *ever* announced an Oscar winner in *any* category, let alone Best Picture. Even stranger, one of the nine nominees extolled a mission the First Lady's husband ordered and Barack appeared in. The Best Picture victor turned out to be another unabashedly pro-CIA movie. Mrs. Obama opened the envelope and declared "Argo"—containing footage of her husband's Democratic predecessor, Jimmy Carter—had snared movie-dom's highest honor.

Executed like a top secret mission, Michelle's participation is not totally unprecedented. In 1941 FDR made a radio speech broadcast during the Oscars. In 1981's telecast—delayed due to the attempt on his life—ex-actor Pres. Reagan addressed the audience via a prerecorded message shot at the Executive Mansion. In 2002 during a pre-taped montage with notables expressing "What Do the Movies Mean to You?" Laura Bush discussed "Giant." In January 2013 ex-Pres. Clinton introduced "Lincoln" live at the Globes ceremony. But Michelle is the only First Family member to open the envelope and declare an Oscar winner. Her appearance prompted outspoken actor Ed Asner to quip: "I guess you could say we have our own Leni Riefenstahl." The Academy declined interview requests.

Yet, things got even weirder as director/co-star Ben Affleck

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## Argo is a motion picture ode to Hollywood's collaboration with the CIA vis-a-vis covert operations.

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took the stage with co-producers George Clooney and Grant Heslov (who could not be reached for comment). Earlier during the ceremony Affleck's wife, Jennifer Garner, was an Oscar presenter; during her husband's acceptance speech the telecast cut to her in the audience. Garner not only starred as CIA double agent Sydney Bristow in the TV series "Alias" but actually made a 2004 CIA recruitment ad. (The same actor who'd played Sydney's CIA agent father in "Alias"—Victor Garber—portrayed the Canadian ambassador who hid "Argo's" American escapees from Iranians.)

"Argo" is a motion picture ode to Hollywood collaboration with the CIA vis-à-vis covert operations. With a film touting and endorsing CIA and movie industry collusion and trickery, given the seal of approval by Michelle and Nicholson, Hollywood flew over the cuckoo's nest as three branches of power specializing in make-believe—TV/cinema, the CIA and Executive Branch—merged to pull the wool over Americans' eyes.

### The Cinematic Spies Who Lured Us

Just as the "news" media was enlisted to spread intelligence-generated lies before the Iraq War, in 2012 intelligence agencies hid in plain sight, using television and movies to spread disinformation. According to IMDB.com 2012's spy productions received 365 nominations and awards. Audiences willingly suspend disbelief in dreamlike states in the dark, watching the screen under the illusion that, as actor and *CounterPuncher* David Clennon says, "Hey, it's just a movie!" Instead, unsuspecting viewers are often bombarded by agit-prop parading as "entertainment" that's rarely acknowledged as being influenced by secretive sources.

Academic Tricia Jenkins writes in "The CIA in Hollywood, How the Agency Shapes Film and Television" that in 1996 Agency veteran Chase Brandon (Tommy Lee Jones' first cousin) was appointed the CIA's Entertainment Liaison Officer in order to respond to the Cold War's end, which left many questioning the need for the CIA, while the case of Aldrich Ames—the Agency's Soviet counterintelligence head caught committing treason—hurt the Company's reputation. Needing damage control and an image upgrade, the Agency turned to Hollywood.

Decorated ex-CIA officer Bob Baer, who Clooney won an Oscar for portraying in "Syriana", adds "it started with a guy named Chris Straub, who was working for Sen. Bob Kerrey, a Democrat. Bob Kerrey was worried that the CIA was getting such bad press, undeservedly, that it was time for the CIA to sit down and consciously help Hollywood to get the message out there that espionage is not bad... It was about that time

that Chase Brandon was put in his job..." (According to a 2001 *CounterPunch* article Kerrey "murdered... a dozen women and children... on a CIA mission" in Vietnam.)

In exchange for script approval the ELO provides CIA assistance and access to its personnel and Langley, Va. headquarters, use of its copyrighted seal, etc., to productions depicting it favorably. Asner says this quid-pro-quo "stinks," but Jenkins notes, "It's the money shot in the spy genre when they walk across that seal in the lobby floor." The Agency's P.R. offensive bore fruit by 2001's Fall TV season, when three series premiered with CIA themes.

Clennon played CIA officer Joshua Nankin in "The Agency" and insists the Company played a major role in molding the CBS show, which ex-Marine Bazzel Baz, who'd been in CIA special ops, "was the CIA technical advisor for." It became "the first television program granted permission to film at CIA headquarters," according to Jenkins' 2012 book, which quotes telewriter/executive producer Michael Frost Beckner saying: "Chase [Brandon] and [Director of Central Intelligence George] Tenet agreed to assist us..."

In fact, Clennon says, "There was going to be a premiere screening of the pilot episode at CIA headquarters before it went on the air... Leslie Moonves [president] of CBS [and] the assistant director of the CIA was going to be there, it's possible Tenet was going to be there, it was going to be a big red carpet premiere, because this was something they were comfortable with. The creator of the series, Beckner, was a big admirer of... and very cozy with... the CIA and he had been briefed, informed, backgrounded by the CIA."

However, the Sept. 18, 2001 opening night at Langley was preempted by the Sept. 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attacks. Clennon adds, "the pilot is spooky in that it anticipates a 9/11-type event, only taking place in London" by Al-Qaeda, which plots to attack what one character calls "an international symbol of consumerism." Tony Mendez—the CIA operative Affleck plays in "Argo"—had a technical consultant credit for the pilot. (A different episode aired when "The Agency" debuted Sept. 20.)

The other CIA series premiering around 9/11 were ABC's "Alias" and Fox's "24." Clennon—who won an Emmy for "Dream On" and was Emmy-nominated for "thirtysomething", appeared in "Bound for Glory", "Coming Home", "Missing", "Syriana" and "J. Edgar"—says Hollywood storytelling techniques serve hidden agendas.

"Actors are profoundly responsible for what they do," contends Clennon. "Kiefer Sutherland is profoundly responsible for the acceptance of torture by the general public because of what he did in '24.' He made torture acceptable. Cheney,

Bush and Rumsfeld, who all decided on the torture policy, enhanced interrogation, they could never have sold torture to the American people... [as] necessary and effective. It would never have happened without Kiefer Sutherland,” “24’s” handsome leading man playing Counter Terrorist Unit agent/

missed an opportunity.” The National Religious Campaign Against Torture’s Paz Artaza-Regan declared: “There’s no grounding in ethics and morality in ‘Zero Dark Thirty’, or even of the effectiveness of torture... We want the Senate Intelligence Committee’s 6,000 page report made public. The



Raid on Bin Laden Compound, still from Zero Dark Thirty”. Sony Pictures.

torturer Jack Bauer, “a model and a hero for Guantanamo interrogators,” states Clennon, citing Philippe Sands’ “Torture Team.”

For Clennon this mixture of sadism and sex appeal also holds for “Zero Dark Thirty”: “Our heroine, who inflicts torture, is a dedicated CIA officer played by a very beautiful young woman [Chastain]. This draws us in so we root for a coldblooded murderer.”

Using attractive leads helps draw audiences to the conclusion that while torture may be reprehensible it’s effective, rendered acceptable by supposed results yielded via “enhanced interrogation techniques,” such as waterboarding. Many disagree. At a Feb. 17 anti-torture program in Hollywood’s United Methodist Church attorney Cindy Pánuco, who represents Gitmo detainee Obaidulla, said: “Not one character in the movie decried what we did, the violating of laws. The film

U.S. public demands accountability.”

But “Zero” went into wide release while the Senate report remains classified. The film opens with a title stating it’s based on “firsthand accounts”—but doesn’t state from who. “Clearly, ‘Zero Dark Thirty’ had CIA assistance,” asserts Jenkins. “They were invested in assisting that film because it does depict the CIA to be so efficient or so successful... Both the writer and the director... met with lots of people at the CIA... Bigelow, Boal and their assistants contacted the CIA’s office of public affairs to discuss setting up meetings with CIA personnel. They were asked for an advance copy of the script... Because the script depicted the CIA very positive... it met the CIA’s standards... of a project they’d support. Then they had meetings arranged with the CIA’s then-Acting Director of Central Intelligence... Mike Morrell, the Director of the counter-terrorism center and others in the Agency, like

Michael Vickers, a former CIA operative and Undersecretary of Defense for Intelligence, that was partly responsible for locating bin Laden... and Jeremy Bash, who was Leon Panetta's chief of staff and a translator involved in the raid. They also got a tour of the 'vault', the room where the operation was monitored... and... of the CIA's basic facility" at Langley.

Baer, a consultant for 2007's "Rendition", 2010's "Red" and the upcoming "Jack Ryan", believes "they were also given access to SEAL Team 6... I still don't know who, if anybody, pressed on the filmmakers the idea that torture worked. There are certain people in the Directorate of Operations that made that case. But I've seen no evidence waterboarding led to the capture of Osama bin Laden."

Other 2012 espionage award winners also collaborated with the Company. Jenkins says, "Claire Danes visited the

Declassified" Affleck admits he met with the CIA Director and other agents and permitted to shoot inside of Langley. "Argo" explicitly lionizes Hollywood's collaboration with a CIA covert mission. John Goodman plays makeup man four-time Emmy Award nominee John Chambers, who designed Mr. Spock's ears, won an Oscar for 1968's "Planet of the Apes"—plus created prosthetics and disguises for the Agency.

"Argo's" hagiography never mentions that the CIA it celebrates as rescuers also overthrew Iran's democratically elected government, re-installed the Shah and colluded with Savak's torture of political prisoners, which led to 1979's Iranian Revolution and "hostage crisis." "Operation Ajax"—the 1953 coup—was masterminded by Kermit Roosevelt (Teddy's grandson), chief of the C.I.A.'s Near East and Africa division. "Argo" is also rehashes the 1981 made-for-TV movie "Escape

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## As part of a communications counter-offensive, clandestine organizations turn to mass entertainment to polish their tarnished images, using perceived triumphs to generate positive perceptions of the agencies.

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CIA and met with a couple of female operatives to find out what their job was like... The writers had secured through the CIA's public affairs office... [Howard Gordon] the writer for 'Homeland' was executive producer, also worked on '24.' He had some assistance for a season of '24.'"

New Zealand's parliament passed a critical motion, Iran is considering suing and Canada expressed displeasure because of their depictions in "Argo", which Andrew O'Hehir called "a propaganda fable" and "wholesale fictionalization" in Salon. Baer, who was in Iran in 1978, says, "I know there was no big confrontation at the airport," nor did the dramatic bazaar visit occur. Jenkins adds: "There's lots of historical inaccuracies in it... There was a CIA-assisted text... When I interviewed Tony Mendez ... in like 2008 he did say he was making arrangements for the writer of that script to visit with the CIA. ... I'm pretty sure Ben Affleck was able to get meetings with those in the CIA... He was in [2002's] 'The Sum of All Fears', a heavily assisted text by the CIA. They were involved in everything from set design to script review to meeting with the actors, director, writers... [Tom Clancy's] Jack Ryan series has always been more positive in terms of its depiction of the CIA than other film franchises, but... 'Sum of All Fears' of all Jack Ryan films is the most positive in its depiction."

Jenkins writes: "Affleck and ['Sum's'] director, Phil Alden Robinson, also met with DCI George Tenet and other high-ranking officials"; the filmmakers were allowed aerial and exterior shots of CIA HQ. In the documentary "Argo:

From Iran: The Canadian Caper", written by Hollywood arch-reactionary Lionel Chetwynd.

### Operation Image Control

Public perception of the world's best financed intel organizations plummeted after failing to prevent 9/11. CIA Director George Tenet called allegations regarding Iraqi WMDs "a slum dunk" and sat mutely behind Secretary of State Colin Powell at the U.N. while he lied about Saddam's WMDs in February 2003, for which Tenet won the Presidential Medal of Freedom. CIA practices such as torture, destruction of videotapes of enhanced interrogations, extraordinary renditions, targeted killings and the Raymond Allen Davis incident which outraged Pakistan further besmirched the CIA's standing. More recently, the Benghazi embassy attack and Boston marathon bombing triggered "intelligence failures" charges against the cloak-and-dagger community.

"The CIA has become very much an antechamber of the Pentagon," Baer maintains. "In the sense that it's drones, and it's only drones, and supporting the military in Iraq and Afghanistan. That's not the CIA I know... It's very much a military organization, it caters to the Pentagon."

Drone warfare is so secretive it's difficult to tally casualties; in February Sen. Lindsay Graham estimated 4,700 fatalities. According to the Bureau for Investigative Journalism up to 1,727 people have been injured and up to 4,379 people killed by U.S. drone strikes from 2002-2013 in Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia, including up to 209 children.

These CIA-linked policies spark outrage. In January an investigation into drone warfare led by U.N. Special Rapporteur Ben Emmerson began. In March, after meeting government officials and victims of unmanned aerial vehicles in Islamabad Emmerson stated “the U.S. drone campaign... violat[es] Pakistan’s sovereignty.”

Since 9/11 the CIA committed some of its biggest blunders and dirtiest dirty tricks—but the show must go on. Call it “Operation Image Control”: On the one hand, “The Obama administration has been cruelly and unusually punishing in its use of the 1917 Espionage Act to stomp on governmental leakers, truth-tellers, and whistleblowers... charg[ing] more people (six) under the Espionage Act for the alleged mishandling of classified information than all past presidencies combined... [including] former CIA officer John Kiriakou, charged for allegedly disclosing classified information to journalists about the horrors of waterboarding,” according to Peter Van Buren’s 2012 Mother Jones article. However, at the same time Bradley Manning and WikiLeaks’ Julian Assange face the iron heel, 007 kills the messenger in “Skyfall”, its Bond villain a computer hacktivist revealing MI-6’s top secrets online, played by Javier Bardem wearing an Assange-like blondish wig.

As part of this communications counteroffensive clandestine organizations again turn to mass entertainment to polish tarnished images, using perceived triumphs to generate positive perceptions. As Jenkins says, “The CIA gets a lot of credit” for liquidating bin Laden and sought to maximize this P.R. opportunity. Baer asserts: “When we’ve got two inconclusive wars—the War on Terror costing \$6 trillion, and what do we get for it except one dead Saudi? I think it’s important that some of the news be good and it was important to the White House. This president cannot be seen as anti-CIA or anti-military... Obama was basically saying in a very political decision: ‘Look, I did more drones, I killed bin Laden.’”

“Argo” flashbacked 33 years to exalt the Agency. “This is a victory the CIA was able to pull off,” Jenkins notes. “It was an intelligence and White House community success. In some ways, just visually, [Michelle’s] presence with the military personnel behind her does create visual links of a celebration of government agencies and their success.” Mrs. Obama announced “Argo’s” Oscar while Brennan’s confirmation as CIA Director nominee was pending.

So why is this Tinseltown trend—which includes FX’s Cold War-set series “The Americans” and HBO’s documentary “Manhunt”, about the CIA’s bin Laden pursuit, which premiered May 1—happening now? Jenkins points out: “One reason might be that after Chase Brandon left as CIA Entertainment Liaison Officer from 1995 to 2006 and Paul Barry departed in 2008 those duties were shared among the Public Affairs Office’s four person media relations team, and they only appointed another ELO about a year ago,” coinciding with espionage productions’ renaissance.

“There’s a real attempt to sanitize CIA killings and glorify the CIA and give it a new face,” declares Code Pink’s Medea Benjamin. “That’s what happened with ‘Zero Dark Thirty’, that’s what happened with Michelle Obama... When she appeared my jaw dropped; I couldn’t believe it... It was really a disgusting propaganda film, as well as ‘Argo’, glorifying the role of the CIA... The fact that this was happening while the CIA is in one of its darkest periods ever in the history of this country—there have been several times in our history when the CIA has gone rogue, and this is one of them.”

*CounterPunch* contacted the CIA’s PAO and its current Entertainment Liaison Officer, Ian. The cartoonish secretiveness of the female receptionist and Ian (no last name provided) suggested the screen spies Boris and Natasha from *Rocky* and *Bullwinkle*; Ian and the PAO declined interview requests.

### **On His President’s Secret Service**

Conservatives grouse about government support of the arts. Ironically, the CIA’s preferential treatment of projects actually subsidizes rightwing productions by providing assistance and access solely to works favorably depicting it. In her book Jenkins quotes constitutional law scholar Erwin Chemerinsky: “the Supreme Court has said that above all, the First Amendment means that the government cannot participate in viewpoint discrimination.” But the CIA, a taxpayer-funded government agency, blatantly practices perspective bias.

Jenkins also argues that self-aggrandizing puffery in CIA-supported productions violates publicity and propaganda laws. Viewers need “truth in advertising” labeling all works supported by covert agencies.

Just as “Argo” neglects the CIA’s role in overthrowing Iran’s legitimate government in 1953, “Zero” never cites the collaboration between the CIA and bin Laden during the mujahedeen’s holy war against the U.S.S.R. Nor does HBO’s “Manhunt”, flattery fobbed off as “nonfiction” filmmaking, hailing CIA analysts as conquering heroes for pursuing Osama, although CIA support of this terrorist during the anti-Soviet jihad in Afghanistan isn’t mentioned. If they’re such Einsteins, why did the CIA collaborate with such a dangerous extremist? Why couldn’t these Brainiacs deduce the possible blowback from being a superpower busybody playing footsy with fanatics? No shit, Sherlocks!

Not all filmmakers collude with spy-dom. Robert De Niro directed and co-starred with Matt Damon in 2006’s “The Good Shepherd”, a bold critique of CIA history, and spoofs spooks in the “Meet the Fockers” franchise.

In 2003’s “The Recruit” Al Pacino plays a CIA instructor who tells trainees: “We reveal our failures but not our successes.” As Moore’s montage reveals, CIA Realpolitik “successes” are far more terrifying than its “failures.” As Louie Armstrong’s “What a Wonderful World” ironically plays footage of various overthrows, covert actions—many by the

CIA—is shown, including coups in Iran, Guatemala, Chile, the Indochina wars, Central America’s wars and Iran-Contra. As a jet flies into the Twin Towers the title proclaims: “Sept. 11, 2001: Osama bin Laden uses his expert CIA training to murder 3,000 people.”

Nobel Peace Laureate Obama may weep for Sandy Hook’s butchered children, but his drones killed 10 times more children than Adam Lanza did. Were he alive Lanza might quote Charlie Chaplin playing the serial wife murderer in 1947’s “Monsieur Verdoux” who compares himself to politicians: “As a mass killer, I am an amateur by comparison.”

The Military-Industrial-Intelligence-Entertainment Complex uses armed aggression to attain foreign policy objectives, then heralds perpetrators of these covert actions in disguised “amusements” for mass audiences in an endless cycle of murder and mayhem, perpetuating a cult of violence from Waziristan to Newtown, on- and offscreen. **CP**

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## Houses of the Dead

### Human Rights Crimes Inside America’s Control Unit Prisons

BY NANCY KURSHAN

In 1985 some colleagues and I in Chicago registered, with shock, the brutality of the US Penitentiary at Marion in southern Illinois and organized a program to alert the public (really, the movement) about what was going on. We would do just this, we told ourselves, and then get back to all the other movement work in which we were involved. Just this.

But the work, of course, would not be left alone. The inhumanity, brutality and torture by the United States demanded a humane response and we tried to provide that. Fifteen years later we were still fighting against prison brutality in general and control units or isolation units in particular. Over those 15 years we sponsored perhaps a 100 demonstrations throughout the country, 200 major educational events, published a huge amount of literature, put forward theoretical insights into prisons and control units in particular and foreshadowed more recent formulations like those of Michelle Alexander in her very wonderful book, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*.

In the course of those years, we made several predictions along the way and issued associated cautions. One way to evaluate the power of an analysis is by its ability to predict. Our two primary predictions were: 1) that imprisonment would reach 1 million by 2000, fueled particularly by a rise in incarceration of people of color; 2) that control unit prisons would proliferate and serve as an anchor dragging the whole system in a more repressive direction. (In contrast the Bureau

of Prisons, the BOP, insisted that control units would allow the overall system to run more openly.) We were unfortunately correct on all scores. Our prisons are a human rights disaster. In 1971, no prisoner lived under control unit conditions. Today, there are control units in virtually every state in the union, and whether they are called Control Units, Supermax, SHU (Secure Housing Unit), Administrative Maximum Facility ADX), Communication Management Unit (CMU), a skunk by any other name still stinks. On any given day, over 80,000 prisoners live under these torturous conditions.

## History

Previous to 1963, the worst prison in the U.S. was Alcatraz, the island prison located in the middle of San Francisco Bay. It was the place where the U.S. government sent the people it hated the most. Morton Sobell was incarcerated there, co-defendant of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg who were executed during the McCarthy era. Also interned there was Puerto Rican independence leader and political prisoner, Rafael Cancel Miranda. And of course many others, not all political prisoners.

In 1963 the BOP closed the federal penitentiary at Alcatraz as it had become too expensive to run and was outdated in every possible way. The replacement was USP Marion, located in southern Illinois. Marion then became, as Alcatraz had been, the end of the line of the federal prison system, the place where the US government would send those prisoners it hated the most—not at all the most violent prisoners but those the government wanted hidden from view. One of the corollaries of this was that many of the most resistant and politicized prisoners were sent to Marion. Both Alcatraz and now the new prison at Marion, Illinois, ran relatively freely. That is, prisoners lived and worked with other prisoners. They ate in a communal dining hall. They had group recreation and religious services. On occasion, a prisoner would be put in solitary (thrown in the hole) in response to a perceived infraction. Today we are used to images of prisoners in solitary confinement, but back then it was not the rule.

In 1972, after guards severely beat a Mexican prisoner, the prisoners went on a work stoppage, refusing to participate in their work assignments. In response the feds locked down one wing of the prison, throwing all the prisoners in that unit into indefinite solitary confinement, in what was essentially the first “control unit.” One of the people locked down was Rafael Cancer Miranda, the well-known Puerto Rican nationalist, who was accused of being a leader of the strike.

In October of 1983, two prisoners at Marion (in fact, members of the Aryan Brotherhood) killed a guard, ironically in the control unit wing of the prison. There was no response in the rest of the prison, no rebellion, no peaceful work stoppage. Nonetheless, the BOP seized on the opportunity to lock down the entire prison, all 350 men. This was the

first such control unit prison. The BOP claimed that this was a temporary measure but as the lockdown continued, some of us who had been monitoring the situation were not optimistic that this was a short term development. As 1983 continued into 1984 and then 1985 we grew more and more alarmed. We understood that this was a significant and new historical development, that we were seeing a restructuring of prison life as we knew it. We realized that the government was experimenting, not just on the prisoners, but on us as well. If these horrific conditions could win public acceptability, then control units would proliferate everywhere. In 1985 we issued a call for a conference in Chicago in October to commemorate two years of the lockdown and to better understand what the future held in store.

### **Why Do We Care About Prisons?**

I have been asked by many people why would I choose to do work regarding prisons? My answer is simple. In high school and college I was part of the civil rights movement. I picketed Woolworths with CORE, raised money for SNCC workers in the South, heard Dr. King speak in D.C. and Malcolm X in Madison. I see work to abolish control units as a logical continuation of that anti-racist work.

Albert Hunt's article in the *NY Times* on Nov. 20, 2011 entitled "A Country of Inmates" reported that "With just a little more than 4 percent of the world's population, the U.S. accounts for a quarter of the planet's prisoners and has more inmates than the leading 35 European countries combined." Moreover, this mass imprisonment binge does not affect all sectors of the population equally. No, the prisons are overflowing disproportionately with Black and Latino prisoners. As Hunt wrote, "more than 60 percent of the United States' prisoners are black or Hispanic, though these groups comprise less than 30 percent of the population." One in nine black children has a parent in jail! If it weren't for the over-incarceration of people of color, the U.S. imprisonment rates would look similar to those of many a European country.

Although we concentrated on control units, we did so because we saw them as the capstone of a thoroughly racist prison system. Both mass incarceration and control units are

united in terms of their underlying ideology. Both come out of a profoundly racist ideology that blames the victim and refuses to deal with the structural challenges and fault lines of our society. And of course, refuses to change the pitiful conditions inside our prisons.

We have never really dealt with the legacy of slavery. We have not dealt with the immigration challenge. We have not dealt with the lack of jobs at a living wage. We have not made room at the table. We have not dealt with how to "rehabilitate" people, especially since, as Malcolm said, they have never "been habilitated." Rather we have met the challenge of a huge under-reported unemployment problem with an imprisonment binge. And the challenge of an anti-human prison system with control unit prisons.

Our prisons have no real plans for 'rehabilitation.' That would require a restructuring of society, a real jobs and education program—one that we need now more than ever but that is not on the horizon. In fact, the jobs program that we do have has been building more prisons and hiring more guards. The prisons are located long distances from the urban centers that most prisoners call home and offer jobs to a

totally different sector of the population. The imprisonment binge has served to get largely young men of color off the streets, warehousing them to prevent any disruption that might come from millions of unemployed men of color out on the pavement.

### **Social Control of People of Color**

Beyond racism, the more we studied together, the more we learned about imprisonment. The well-known criminologist William Nagel found that there is no relationship between the crime rate and the imprisonment rate, and no relationship between the crime rate and the number of Black people that live in a given state. But he found a strong relationship between the imprisonment rate and the proportion of Black people who live in a given state. In other words, people go to prison because they are Black not because of a rising crime rate. It became apparent to us that prisons are instruments of social control of people of color. Before the 1970s we did



Secure housing unit. Pelican Bay State Prison.

not have these huge imprisonment rates, nor did we have control unit prisons. In the 1960s Black people led the way in challenging injustice. They were a force to be reckoned with. When Martin Luther King and Malcolm X were assassinated, there was mass unrest with urban centers going up in flames around the country.

The Attica prison rebellion of 1971 was a watershed where prisoners stood up and said: “We are men. We are not beasts and will not be treated as such.” To a large extent, the rebellion was an expression within Attica of the Black liberation movement on the outside. When the tear gas and bullets cleared, 43 men were dead as a result of Rockefeller-ordered military assault. Control units try to prevent the kind of camaraderie and resistance from developing that was exhibited on the yard at Attica.

For almost 50 years prior to Attica, the U.S. incarceration rates were constant, and commensurate with those of Western Europe. In response to the movements of the 60s and early 70s, particularly civil rights and black liberation, in response to Attica and George Jackson and the California prison movement, imprisonment rates started to soar, and we saw the beginnings of what would become a mass imprisonment binge. It was no accident that control units began to emerge at the same time. Just as prisons control a population on the outside of prisons that was demanding human rights, control units control a rebellious prison population on the inside. The first control unit was opened at Marion in 1972, exactly in response to a peaceful work stoppage and a year after the incredible uprising at Attica.

In 1975 the right-wing ideologue and Harvard Professor Samuel Huntington wrote *The Crisis of Democracy*, a report for the Trilateral Commission, in which he argued that there was too much democracy and things needed to change. Well, things have changed. And now, thanks to both Republicans and Democrats, the leading ‘democracy’ in the world is also the largest incarceration nation.

## **The Real Human Rights Problem is Here in the USA**

So what is a control unit prison?

There are variations from prison to prison, but generally speaking, a control unit prison is one in which every prisoner is locked away in their own individual cage about 23 hours a day under conditions of severe sensory deprivation. The prisoner eats, sleeps and defecates in the windowless cell. Meals come through a slot in the door. In some cases the prisoner may be out of the cell a couple of times a week for exercise, but in other circumstances the exercise area is even more limited and is attached to the cell itself. Most control unit prisons have little access to education or any recreational outlets.

Usually, control units severely restrict the prisoner’s connection not just with other prisoners, but with family and

friends in the outside world. At Marion, only family members could visit, upon approval, and only for a small number of visits per month. The amount of time allowed per visit was severely restricted, and there was no privacy whatsoever and no contact permitted between prisoner and visitor. Visiting took place over a plexiglass wall and through telephones. Guards were always within earshot. The prisoner had to be searched before and after, sometimes cavity searched. The visitor had to undergo a body search as well. The prisoners were brought to the visit in shackles.

Regarding the underlying dynamics, the intent is to make the prisoner feel that his or her life is completely out of control. That is not an unintended consequence. The purpose of the control unit is to make the person feel helpless, powerless and completely dependent upon the prison authorities. The intent is to strip the individual of any agency, any ability to direct his or her own life. A control unit institutionalizes solitary confinement as a way of exerting full control over as much of the prisoner’s life as possible.

There is no pretense that this is a temporary affair. Instead it is long-term, severe behavior modification, and it is the most vile, mind & spirit-deforming use of solitary confinement. Control units represent the darkest side of behavior modification. Inside a control unit, the prisoner usually has no idea how long he or she will be there. It is an indeterminate sentence, and usually the rules or guidelines for exiting are unclear at best and impossible to comprehend at worst. It is a hell without any apparent end. It is truly Kafkaesque and studies have shown that long-term solitary confinement drives many people crazy. As a social worker in the Chicago public schools for 20 years, and as a human being, I don’t believe this severe punishment helps people to change in any positive way. Human interaction is critical. The Quakers first instituted solitary confinement (they called isolation in a cell with a bible “doing penance,” hence “penitentiary”). They thought it would be a more humane alternative than physical punishment such as flogging, but they gave it up when they saw what effect it had on people.

Being sent to a control unit prison is tantamount to torture, as acknowledged by many human rights organizations including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. Amnesty International recently released its 2012 report, “The Edge of Endurance: Conditions in California’s Security Housing Units,” in which the conditions in two California prisons—Corcoran and Pelican Bay—are described as “cruel, degrading and inhuman” and a violation of international standards. Readers can check it out at the Amnesty International site.

Prisoners are held under conditions that today are not considered ‘humane’ even for animals. This is an extreme abuse of state power.

The existence of the control unit also functions to control other prisoners who are in the general population. This is as



important to the system as the impact on those actually in the control unit. The fear of imprisonment in this worst of all prisons is meant to scare all prisoners into tolerating intolerable conditions. The word 'Marion' was meant to strike cold fear into the hearts of prisoners throughout the federal prison system.

The people who are sent to control unit prisons are not different from those people in the general population of a maximum security prison in terms of the crimes for which they are incarcerated. Most have not been convicted of violent crimes. Many are political prisoners, jailhouse lawyers, and natural leaders.

## **Domestic and International Connection**

In my book *Out of Control* I argue that CEML's 15 years of work is "the story of one long determined effort against the very core of the greatest military empire that has ever existed on this planet" . . . and that "in this day of debate about Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib, it is absolutely essential to realize that a direct line extends from U.S. control units to these so-called 'enhanced interrogation' centers throughout the world." The connection has always been there because we live under one system, and that system has a domestic side and an international side. But they are really just two sides of the same coin.

In *Out of Control* I discuss a 1962 Bureau of Prisons (BOP) meeting in Washington, DC between prison officials and social scientists. Billed as a management development program for prison wardens, it took place the same year the BOP opened Marion. Dr. Edgar Schein of MIT, a key player at that meeting, had written previously in a book entitled *Coercive Persuasion* about 'brainwashing' of Chinese Prisoners of War (POWs). In the meeting he presented the ideas in a paper entitled "Man Against Man":

"In order to produce marked changes of attitude and/or behavior, it is necessary to weaken, undermine, or remove the supports of the old attitudes. Because most of these supports are the face-to-face confirmation of present behavior and attitudes, which are provided by those with whom close emotional ties exist, it is often necessary to break these emotional ties. This can be done either by removing the individual physically and preventing any communication with those whom he cares about, or by proving to him that those whom he respects are not worthy of it, and, indeed, should be actively mistrusted. . . I would like to have you think of brainwashing, not in terms of politics, ethics, and morals, but in terms of the deliberate changing of human behavior and attitudes by a group of men who have relatively complete control over the environment in which the captive populace lives." (Berrigan, p.6)

Along with these theories, Schein put forward a set of

'practical recommendations,' that threw ethics and morals out the window. They included physical removal of prisoners to areas sufficiently isolated to effectively break or seriously weaken close emotional ties; segregation of all natural leaders; spying on prisoners, reporting back private material; exploitation of opportunists and informers; convincing prisoners they can trust no one; systematic withholding of mail; building a group conviction among prisoners that they have been abandoned by or are totally isolated from their social order; using techniques of character invalidation, i.e. humiliation, revilement and shouting to induce feelings of fear, guilt and suggestibility; coupled with sleeplessness, an exacting prison regimen and periodic interrogational interviews.

So-called 'brainwashing' strategies that involved physical as well as psychological abuse were being adopted from international arenas and applied inside U.S. prisons. Now, in 2011, similar strategies, honed in Marion and its progeny, are being employed around the world in Guantanamo, Abu Ghraib, and elsewhere.

## **Lessons**

The underlying ideology has to be challenged because if that doesn't change, the rulers will tweak this or that to their conveniences, they may make some small changes, or even do the right thing at any given moment, for the wrong reason. But things will revert toward repression.

Understand that the whole criminal justice system, indeed the whole society, needs to be transformed. Fight to change the day-to-day conditions of prisoners but while educating people about the whole situation. Celebrate the small changes but never let them be enough.

Studies don't necessarily change things. Pressure, both legal and activist, is essential. Hearings can be a step in the right direction but they can also be a smokescreen to lull people into believing something is being done. Or they can be a rubber stamp for some negative developments. For instance, the BOP has apparently just recently agreed to undergo a "comprehensive and independent assessment of its use of solitary confinement in the nation's federal prisons." The assessment will reportedly be oriented toward reducing the population of "segregated" prisoners. It is to be conducted by the National Institute of Corrections, an agency of the BOP! That is something to be watched, but skeptically.

Listen to prisoners. Trust what they tell you about prison conditions. Support their efforts to change their situation. Help their voices reach the outside world.

Work with everyone who is willing. We don't have to all agree but we have to respect each other. Do not let the authorities demonize some activists and bestow accolades on others. That is the old divide and rule.

## **Opportunity**

The time is right to build a powerful force to oppose these

institutions of torture. The people who fought the fascists in the Spanish Civil War are sometimes referred to as “premature anti-fascists”. Perhaps the members of the Committee to End the Marion Lockdown were “premature anti-solitary” activists. But now is the time, now is the moment. Most importantly, prisoners are resisting. 12,000 California prisoners, in the summer of 2011, went on hunger strike in opposition to the conditions in control unit prisons. There is awakening consciousness that these institutions are tantamount to torture. Not a single editorial ever appeared in a significant mass media outlet opposing control units during our 15 years. Now the *New York Times* has opposed them. Additionally, the money to run these expensive institutions is running out. Illinois’ control unit prison, Tamms, that we fought to prevent from opening, has recently been closed by Governor Quinn. Senator Durbin has called for an investigation into solitary confinement. There are openings. But we cannot rely on politicians to do the right thing. We can work with politicians who are true allies, but we have to be out in the community talking to people, and out in the streets and in front of the prisons, formulating our demands and building a powerful movement.

Fyodor Dostoevsky, in the *House of the Dead*, said “That to understand a civilization, it is necessary to look within its prisons.” Mohandas Gandhi once asked “What do you think of Western civilization? His answer was, “I think it would be a good idea.” So come on people. Let’s get on with it. **CP**

**NANCY KURSHAN** is the author of *Out of Control: a Fifteen Year Battle to Abolish Control Unit Prisons*. The book is available through the Freedom Archives.

## Brotherhood of Summer

### Major League Baseball’s Extraordinary Labor History

BY DAVID MACARAY

To fully appreciate baseball’s labor history, we need to put the game in its proper perspective. Which is to say we need to acknowledge that there was a time when baseball was everything. It was not only America’s *favorite* sport, it was its *only* sport. Yes, we had some boxing and rowing and college football, but compared to baseball, they were trivial endeavors. Whoever dubbed baseball the “national pastime” wasn’t being facetious; they were stating a hallowed fact.

The very first “professional” team (where every player was paid a salary) was the Cincinnati Red Stockings, established in 1869. The star of that Red Stockings club was a shortstop named George Wright, who was paid \$1,400 a season. And because Cincinnati was home to baseball’s first professional team, a tradition was established where the modern day Cincinnati Reds were permitted to open every season at home.

Despite the NFL being established way back in 1920, and the NBA in 1946, it took professional football and hoops decades to shed the image of “minor sports.” Pro football didn’t gain national prominence until the 1960s, with the proliferation of television, and basketball not until the 1970s (some would even argue that the NBA didn’t “arrive” until the Magic Johnson-Larry Bird era).

Yet this country had a professional baseball team in 1869—almost half a century before the arrival of Babe Ruth. Remarkably, we were already attending professional baseball games *four years* after the end of the Civil War. Baseball was everything.

Accordingly, because the game was so popular (and lucrative), the players and owners were butting heads almost from Day One. The players demanded higher pay, more autonomy, less hassles, and fewer restrictions (e.g., well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century they were still required to buy their own uniforms), while the owners insisted that playing baseball was a “privilege,” not a job—even though most teams were rolling in pre-federal income tax revenue.

Still, butting heads or not, it’s surprising to learn that baseball’s labor history is older and richer than many of America’s most storied industrial and service unions. It’s true. The first baseball union was the Brotherhood of Professional Base Ball Players (note that “baseball” was still two words), established way back in 1885, a mere nine years after the National League was formed, and sixteen years before the American League came into being.

Compare baseball’s labor pedigree with some of America’s big-time unions. For example, the United Mineworkers (UMW) was formed in 1890; the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU) in 1900; the International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT) in 1903; the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) in 1921; the United Auto Workers (UAW) in 1935; and the United Steelworkers (USW) not until 1942.

The Brotherhood of Professional Base Ball Players (known as the “Brotherhood”) was co-founded by future Hall of Fame players Ned Hanlon (who was then playing for the National League Detroit Wolverines) and John Ward (then playing for the New York Gothams—renamed the “Giants” in 1885). In addition to being a star ballplayer, John Ward was also an accomplished lawyer, just the man to lead the charge in forming professional sports’ first labor union.

Ironically, it was baseball’s burgeoning popularity that motivated Ward and Hanlon to establish the Brotherhood. As profitable as the game had become, even its star players had little leverage when it came to salary negotiations. And these were the stars; imagine what it was like for the supporting cast. Not only were players woefully under-compensated and under-appreciated they were governed by arrogant and tyrannical club owners. Forming a labor union seemed like the obvious next move.

But there was more to protest than low wages. Baseball's notorious "reserve clause" was already anathema to the players. The reserve clause stipulated that when you signed with a team, you were forced to remain with them in perpetuity, unless they chose to *let* you leave. The slogan the players grimly used was, you either "report or retire." Even back in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, these ballplayers (most of whom were country boys) recognized the clause for what it was: a form of indentured servitude.

Unfortunately, despite its optimism and fighting spirit, the Brotherhood made little progress. The owners were simply too powerful. As a consequence, the players (again led by the intrepid John Ward) took a radical step forward. They reached the audacious conclusion that there was no logical need for players to be "owned" by anyone. After all, who were these owners—other than a group of rich and greedy men who couldn't catch or hit a baseball? What did they actually contribute to the game?

The players decided that there were only three things required to form a league: (1) teams to play against, (2) a field to play on, and (3) spectators willing to pay. And that observation—coupled with a heavy dose of chutzpah—was all it took for them to break away and, in 1890, form their own league. They called themselves the Players League.

There were eight teams in the Players League: the Boston Reds, Brooklyn Ward's Wonders (named by the media for league founder and star player John Ward), New York Giants, Chicago Pirates, Philadelphia Athletics, Pittsburgh Burghers (Ned Conlan's team), Cleveland Infants, and Buffalo Bisons. It's unlikely any team today would dare call themselves the "Infants," but times change. They played roughly 135 games, and the Boston Reds won the championship.

The Players League lasted only one season. It opened in 1890, and folded the same year. There were numerous reasons for its demise. Along with logistical and administrative difficulties, the players were inundated by owner interference. The owners threatened, flattered, lectured, consoled, and pestered them until they finally called it quits. But even though it turned out to be only a one-year mutiny, the lesson of the Players League was ominous: Baseball players had shown they were willing to fight.

Following the dissolution of the Brotherhood (which collapsed along with the Players League), another players'

union took its place barely a decade later. In 1900, the Players Protective Association (PPA) was founded. Although the PPA took great pains to avoid appearing as radical as the Brotherhood (no former Players League players were allowed on its board), it lasted only until 1902, having been caught up in jurisdictional disputes among the owners (with the American League having burst on the scene in 1901).

Because the problems facing baseball players weren't going away (in addition to demanding increased compensation and autonomy, minor league restrictions had now become an issue), the players continued to seek representation. And, in 1912, yet another union emerged, the Fraternity of Professional Baseball Players of America, founded by David Fultz, former centerfielder for the New York Highlanders (later the Yankees) and now a New York lawyer.

Like the PPA, Fultz and the Fraternity went out of their way to avoid dredging up memories of the Brotherhood, which had come to be regarded by just about everyone—players and owners alike—as having been a truly subversive organization, one that, when it turned renegade and formed its own league, was thought to have almost ruined professional baseball.

But like the IWW (Industrial Workers of the World), which had come

to be both vilified and revered by unionists across the country, the ghost of the Brotherhood continued to haunt the players. They still sought comprehensive changes to the Basic Agreement (the iron-clad document that laid out how major league players were treated), and reasoned that if a labor union couldn't deliver those changes, they'd have to find another way.

Accordingly, when an alternative league was formed, in 1914, many National and American League players instantly defected to it. This new entity was called the Federal League (AKA the "third league"), and it managed to survive for just two years, 1914-1915. Federal League owners filled their rosters with a combination of minor and major league players, including future Hall of Famers Eddie Plank, Chief Bender, Joe Tinker and Johnny Evers.

The Federal League consisted of the following clubs: the Baltimore Terrapins (one of whose owners was Ned Hanlon, of the old Brotherhood), Brooklyn Tip-Tops, Buffalo Blues, Chicago Whales, Indianapolis Hoosiers, Newark Peppers, Kansas City Packers, Pittsburgh Rebels, and St. Louis



Curt Flood and Marvin Miller. Photo: AP.

Terriers. The Indianapolis Hoosiers (led by star outfielder Benny Kauff) were league champs in 1914, and the Chicago Whales in 1915.

Unable to compete with the National and American League, the Federals abruptly folded after two seasons. As for Fultz's Fraternity of Professional Baseball Players, it petered out in 1918, with the onset of World War I. There were rumors that Samuel Gompers, president of the powerful AFL (American Federation of Labor), was going to invite the Fraternity to affiliate, but that offer never materialized. One thing the Federal League did do, however, was create a brief bidding war which bumped up players salaries.

Then, in 1920 (following the infamous 1919 Chicago "Black Sox" scandal, where eight ChiSox players, including the hapless Shoeless Joe Jackson, were accused of throwing the World Series), major league baseball hired the flinty moralist Kenesaw Mountain Landis to be its first commissioner, and, looking to restore baseball's credibility, gave him near dictatorial power. Landis remained commissioner for twenty-five eventful years, from 1920 to 1944.

fledged union members (and be represented in collective bargaining by the ABG), they would have to agree to changes in the Basic Agreement.

Days before the union vote was to take place, the owners agreed to a minimum salary, a spring training stipend, no more daytime double-headers following night games, and the establishment of a modest pension fund. Appeased by management's offer, the players reversed themselves and voted against joining the union. Murphy was crushed by the news. Weeks later, the owners reneged and unilaterally lowered their minimum salary offer by \$500.

In 1953, the players formed the MLBPA, the union they have today. One can divide the MLBPA into two periods: pre-1966 and post-1966. Why? Because 1966 was the year they hired former Steelworker rep Marvin Miller as their executive director. Miller's hiring changed everything. Instead of treating the players like sports celebrities who were seeking a sweeter deal, he treated them like regular blue-collar working stiffs who'd been screwed over by their bosses and were looking to get even.

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## **When Marvin Miller was hired, the average league salary was \$19,000. When he left in 1984, it was \$241,000.**

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During Landis' reign, baseball was marked not so much by the continued search for union representation as by inter-league squabbling and anti-trust lawsuits. Early in his tenure (1922), the Supreme Court exempted baseball from anti-trust and pro-reserve clause legislation, arguing that because the game was a form of entertainment, it did not fall under the jurisdiction of interstate commerce.

Salaries—always modest for the non-stars—were fairly stagnant during Landis' tenure. One explanation was the Great Depression, another explanation was America's entry into World War II. A more plausible explanation is that the owners were simply stingy. For example, after Lou Gehrig's phenomenal 1934 season (he won the Triple Crown), the Yankees refused to give him a raise. This is your contract, sign here. Gehrig had no choice but to sign.

The last big union push before the players formed their present-day Major League Baseball Players Association (MLBPA) occurred in 1946, and was the brainchild of a Harvard-educated former NLRB labor lawyer named Robert Murphy. In April, 1946, Murphy established the American Baseball Guild (ABG), hoping that the players would eventually vote to have the ABG act as their sole bargaining agent.

Murphy's diligence, professionalism, and NLRB savvy—plus the players' increasing awareness of workers' rights—caused the owners to reach the unhappy conclusion that unless they wanted to see their players actually become full-

When Miller was hired, the average major league salary was \$19,000. When he left, in 1982, it was \$241,000. In all fairness, it should be noted that in some ways the table had already been set for him. Not only were players becoming more aggressive and confident in their demands, but society as a whole was demonstrably more politicized and assertive. Even the dimmest of owners had to have seen this coming.

In any event, Miller took the view that because the entertainment industry (music, TV, movies, pro sports) generated so much revenue, it was only fair that the people with the conspicuous talent—the singers, actors and athletes—get the lion's share of the proceeds. After all, it was the performers themselves who were generating the profits. This was the non-negotiable view Miller ferociously clung to for his sixteen years in office.

In 1970, Curt Flood, an all-star outfielder for the St. Louis Cardinals, was told by management that he'd been traded to the Philadelphia Phillies in exchange for hard-hitting Dick Allen. Flood didn't want to move to Philadelphia. For one thing, as an African-American, he was well aware of Philadelphia's ugly reputation as a racist city, and for another, he, like every other ballplayer, resented being bought and sold like a slab of meat.

The MLBPA sued the Cardinals on Flood's behalf, challenging the legality of the reserve clause. They knew it was a long-shot. In 1922, the Supreme Court had sided with the

owners in an anti-trust case, and in 1952 the Celler Senate Sub-Committee had recommended the reserve clause remain intact. Flood's case reached the Supreme Court, but the justices once again ruled in favor of the owners. The protracted legal battle took its toll on Flood. He was vilified by the public as selfish, as a trouble-maker, as a malcontent, as an "angry black man." He never fully recovered from it.

Yet despite losing, Flood's efforts exposed the reserve clause for the antiquated and repressive instrument it was. His loss (and martyrdom) moved baseball ever closer to getting it revoked.

In 1972, Miller took the players' union out on strike. Even though the issues were standard, boiler-plate agenda items (money, autonomy, security), the strike was an earth-shaking event because it was the very first walkout in baseball's long history (not counting a brief "protest strike," in 1912, by Ty Cobb's Detroit's teammates). The union stayed out for thirteen days, resulting in eighty-six games being cancelled.

Whether or not the strike was economically "successful" was irrelevant. What *was* relevant was that by voting overwhelmingly to hit the bricks, the players had succeeded in redefining themselves. They were no longer a rarefied fraternity of privileged athletes asking for a larger share. They had morphed into a group of militant radicals, led by an old-time union negotiator who had introduced hard-nosed industrial labor tactics to the genteel game of baseball. Things would never be the same.

Miller will most likely be remembered for two accomplishments: (1) Being able to pry the owners off their long-standing objections to using impartial arbitrators in binding arbitration cases, and (2) convincing one of those arbitrators (Peter Seitz) to award players Andy Messerschmidt and Dave McNally free agency, thus nullifying the reserve clause.

The Seitz arbitration decision happened in 1975 and it revolutionized the game. It's been said that the three most important people in baseball history were Babe Ruth, Jackie Robinson and Marvin Miller. Curt Flood deserves honorable mention.

When Miller stepped down as executive director, in 1982, and his feisty, young protégé, Don Fehr, took over, the union didn't so much as miss a beat. In fact, if anything, the players became even more aggressive and resolute under the Fehr regime, resorting to several more work stoppages. Including its first strike, in 1972, baseball has had a total of eight strikes and/or lockouts.

The strike of 1994-95 was particularly memorable because it was the only time a World Series was cancelled due to a labor dispute. Of course, the fans and sports pundits went berserk, but the players stood their ground. The owners had demanded a salary cap, arguing that without it, the smaller markets couldn't survive, but the players insisted they receive full market value and not a dime less. That's the American Way. You get what you're worth, not what some artificial con-

straints say you're worth. Hence the strike. And to this day, baseball doesn't have a cap.

After having been repeatedly thwarted at the bargaining table, club owners flirted with alternative approaches to suppressing salaries. After all, these were businessmen whose sole concern was the bottom line. The approach the owners ultimately decided upon was illegal. In 1990, the owners were found guilty of collusion for having conspired not to pay players their competitive market value. The ploy was discovered and the owners were forced to fork over a \$280 million settlement.

Here's a quote from then-commissioner Fay Vincent: "The single biggest reality you guys have to face up to is collusion. You stole \$280 million from the players, and the players are unified to a man around that issue, because you got caught, and many of you are still involved." Listen to him, boys. This is your *own* commissioner talking, not the union's executive director.

So why is baseball's union more effective than those representing other sports? Two reasons: tradition and leadership. Because baseball proudly traces its union origins back almost 130 years, it has no reservations whatever about battling management. In fact, it rejoices in it. Why is the MLBPA tougher than the NBA or NFL's union? For the same reason the ILWU (longshoremen) is tougher than AFTRA (TV and radio artists).

As for leadership, the players would be the first to admit that they had simply lucked-out. Marvin Miller wasn't even their first choice for the big job in 1966 (their first choice was a man named Judge Cannon, but the parties couldn't agree on terms). The same goes for Don Fehr, Miller's successor. Together, Miller and Fehr combined to give the union 40 consecutive years of dedicated, hard-nosed leadership. Ask the National Hockey League (NHL) owners how tough a negotiator Don Fehr is. After leaving baseball, Fehr was persuaded to serve as the hockey union's executive director. The first thing he did was precipitate the 2012-13 lockout. **CP**

**DAVID MACARAY**, an LA playwright and author ("It's Never Been Easy: Essays on Modern Labor"), was a former union rep.

## Tar Sands Come to America: The Keystone Pipeline as Trojan Horse

BY STEVE HORN

Speaking to the chief importance of TransCanada's Keystone XL (KXL) tar sands pipeline during the 350.org-led Tar Sands Action that unfolded in front of the Obama White House in Aug. and Sept. 2011, recently-retired NASA climatologist James Hansen (sadly also a proponent of

nuclear energy production) said that if it was built, it'd be "Game over for the climate." In so doing, Hansen deployed a rhetorical decoy, as the issue was never the KXL and has always been the burning of Alberta's gunky tar sands to begin with, not any single pipeline.

Seven months later, the Obama Administration fast-tracked the building of the pipeline's southern half via an Executive Order handed down in March 2012. On that same day he delivered a campaign stump speech in front of piled pipeline sections at Cushing, OK, the "Pipeline Crossroads of the World." It was an election year and few seemed to notice or care, save for the grassroots-built and grassroots-funded Tar Sands Blockade.

The Obama Order opened a Pandora's Box for the many other ways to transport Alberta's thick, corrosive diluted bitumen ("dilbit") to various markets, calling into question Hansen's "game over" statement as applied exclusively to KXL. In a nutshell, for Big Oil it's a game of pipeline capacity increases, flow reversals, new pipeline proposals; as well as moving it by train and barging.

When industry consultants speak to one another about their business plans, we should all listen. Their PR flacks

Alberta down through Wisconsin and Illinois, eventually snaking its way to Cushing, OK and down to the Gulf. For now, it serves as a supplement to KXL's missing northern half, the "connecting dot" to KXL's southern half along with the original TransCanada Keystone pipeline.

In Nov. 2012, Enbridge applied for a permit to increase the capacity of the Alberta Clipper, a pipeline originally approved by the Obama State Dept. in Aug. 2009. The permit calls for an eventual increase in capacity from 450,000 barrels per day of tar sands to 800,000 barrels per day.

Enbridge's Line 6B spewed over 1 million gallons of tar sands bitumen into the Kalamazoo River in July 2010 - just months after BP's tragic Deepwater Horizon spill in the Gulf of Mexico - in what's now referred to as the "dilbit disaster." It was an on-land version of the BP spill, the biggest on-land pipeline spill in U.S. history. Despite the horrific spill, Enbridge applied for a permit to increase Line 6B's capacity to 500,000 barrels per day in May 2012 - up from 240,000 barrels per day - under two years after the disaster.

Enbridge has filled KXL's gap for now, allowing the Gulf export market for refined tar sands crude to remain standing firm on its two feet.

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## The Enbridge Pipeline would bring Alberta's tar sands to British Columbia, thereafter exported to the Asian export market to the tune of 525,000 barrels a day.

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might lie for a living, but consultants rarely lie to investors.

Enter an industry conference that took place the week of Thanksgiving in 2011, while most peoples' minds were dead set on gobbling up turkey.

Speaking to the New York Energy Forum, Martin Tallett the President of Ensys - an industry consulting firm - told the crowd of investors that KXL isn't as important as most think and that there are "many other ways to skin the cat" and bring the oil sands to market.

"The commitments are there," Tallett told the crowd. "But it's not essential. The industry won't collapse and keel over and die if it isn't approved."

Does KXL serve as an industry Trojan Horse of sorts, distracting from the real issue of whether or not tar sands are brought to any and all markets? It turns out there's quite a bit of wisdom in Tallett's words.

Indeed, many important industry "midstream" (to borrow a technical term) developments have unfolded that allow tar sands to be extracted and shipped to market.

The most important for now in terms of a KXL northern-half replacement is arguably Enbridge's Alberta Clipper Pipeline - also known as Line 67 - which brings dilbit from

Meanwhile on the western frontier, Kinder Morgan's TransMountain pipeline which brings tar sands from Alberta to British Columbia has a proposal to triple its capacity from 300,000 to 890,000 barrels per day.

New pipelines have also been proposed since protestation built up around KXL in the summer of 2011, showing the true flexibility and versatility of one of the most powerful industry's in the history of Planet Earth.

One of those is TransCanada's East-West pipeline, set to bring tar sands from Alberta to a refinery in New Brunswick owned by Irving Oil, where it will then be shipped in the form of 850,000 barrels per day to the European export market. While the tar sands have become a bludgeoning party for the "Harper Government", Canada's opposition party, the New Democrats, also support this KXL supplement.

There's also Enbridge's Northern Gateway, which has been met with strong opposition akin to that faced by KXL. This proposed tube would bring Alberta's tar sands to British Columbia from Alberta, thereafter exported to the Asian export market to the tune of 525,000 barrels per day.

The tip of the iceberg is a newly-considered pipeline from Alberta north to the small native hamlet of Tuktoyaktuk

along the shores of the Beaufort Sea in northwest Canada. The Alberta Energy Dept. is spending \$50,000 to study the pros and cons of building such a pipeline, which would have to cross roughly 2,000 miles of Arctic tundra and wetlands to get to Tuktoyaktuk.

Another controversial pipeline plan is Enbridge's Line 9, a "flow reversal" proposal where the direction of the flow of crude would do a switch-around.

Line 9 currently takes Middle Eastern/African oil imports from the Portland-Montreal Pipeline and sends it to the Imperial Oil-owned Westover, Ontario Terminal located near Lake Huron, where it then heads further westward to the Imperial-owned Sarnia Terminal, also in Ontario. The oil is then refined and taken to various Canadian markets at the end of the journey.

In August 2011, while most activist eyes were on the Keystone XL, Enbridge quietly submitted an application to Canada's National Energy Board (NEB) that would reverse the flow of oil for Line 9, sending Tar Sands crude eastward to the state of Maine, where it would be sent to the coast and placed on the European export market to the tune of roughly 175,000 barrels per day of tar sands crude.

Tar sands on the rail has become an increasingly viable alternative to pipelines, too.

In its Aug. 2011 Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) for KXL, the Obama State Department said that rail currently has the capacity to transport over 1 million barrels of tar sands per day to market.

"Even in a situation where there was a total freeze in pipeline capacity for 20 years, it appears that there is sufficient capacity on existing rail tracks to accommodate shipping... through at least 2030," the SEIS explained. As a case in point, BNSF - owned by billionaire Warren Buffett, a major Obama campaign contributor for his 2008 and 2012 presidential races - is eager to see KXL fail, viewing it as an economic opportunity of epic proportions for its rails.

"Whatever people bring to us, we're ready to haul [and if KXL] doesn't happen, we're here to haul," Krista York-Wooley, a spokeswoman for BNSF said in a Feb. 2012 interview with Bloomberg.

In the newest KXL SEIS that came out in March 2013, the Obama State Dept. also acknowledged the viable freight rail alternative to moving some tar sands to market.

"Because of the flexibility of rail delivery points, once loaded onto trains the crude oil could be delivered to re-

fineries, terminals, and/or port facilities throughout North America, including the Gulf Coast area," the State Department report said.

Following suit, a story in The Washington Post explained that "Canada's rail system has already hit 150,000 barrels a day and is on track to hit 300,000 barrels a day by year's end."

The hazards of rail transport were made clear and brought to the public's attention after the March 2013 Canadian Pacific Rail spill of 30,000 gallons of tar sands bitumen in Minnesota.

The cherry on top is the option of barging tar sands crude to markets utilizing Lake Superior as a thoroughfare, which Calumet Specialty Products Partners is considering. Platts referred to this proposal as "the Great Lakes option for getting Canadian oil to market."



Tar Sands Pipeline. Alberta. Photo: GreenPeace

The industry and its willing executioners, the naive (nay, often purposefully misleading, too) professional environmental movement, and those who may not pay close attention to industry news and developments may wonder how despite the fact that there is somehow an ongoing, rolling KXL "victory," climate change is only getting worse as we creep closer and closer to surpassing the 400 parts per million mark for carbon levels in the atmosphere.

Though the climate change problem extends far above and beyond tar sands production, it certainly does not help that the industry has found numerous replacements and then some for the proposed 830,000 barrels per day KXL project.

Hansen had it right about rampant tar sands production, he just picked the wrong data set in honing in on the KXL exclusively. Like Bowser breathing fire onto Mario in his castle and engulfing him in flames, it's looking more and more like game over for the climate. **CP**

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# CULTURE & REVIEWS

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## Poets Versus the One-Percent

BY LEE BALLINGER

“I was sitting in the woods by my house one day in 2011, totally despairing,” poet Michael Rothenberg told me. “The BP oil spill, Fukushima, war, poverty. I was watching an endless decline and there didn’t seem to be any response. Where are the artists? I thought to myself: ‘There ought to be one hundred thousand poets for change.’ So I put up an event page on Facebook and asked if people would want to stage events in support of economic, political, and social change. I honestly didn’t expect any response. Yet in one week there were twenty events scheduled in ten countries. 100,000 Poets for Change was born. On the last Saturday of September 2011, we had our first coordinated international event with 700 events in 95 countries.”

Now happening annually, in 2012 One Hundred Thousand Poets for Change expanded to 900 events in 115 countries under the banner of “peace and sustainability.” The artistic participation grew beyond poets to include musicians, dancers, photographers, skaters, film makers, mimes, DJs, painters, and more. They got the message out with concerts, readings, lectures, workshops, radio shows, flash mobs, and theater.

There were daylong poetry festivals in California, Guatemala, India, Argentina, and Italy. In New Orleans, fifteen bands performed. The Wordstock Festival in De Leon Springs, Florida included poetry, music, and an art exhibition focusing on images of war and peace. In Greece, there were five days of poetry and music events and a photography exhibition looking at the emergence of homelessness

there. In Jamaica, there was a week-long Street Dub Vibe series of events called “Tell the Children the Truth.” There were dozens of events in Mexico and even poetry and peace gatherings in Kabul and Jalalabad, Afghanistan.

All of this grew out of the vision (and laptops) of just two people, Rothenberg and his partner, poet/photographer Terri Carrion. Yet in truth all their hard work only opened the door for what was already there. The success of 100,000 Poets for Change is not only in its impressive numbers but also in the way it thrusts us up against festering problems in the relationship between culture and politics.

In America it’s generally acknowledged that culture has a place yet it’s generally regarded as a condiment, a minor ingredient in the stew. It’s the Singer at the Rally Syndrome. Almost every rally has a singer, but only one. And that one singer serves as a token representation of all the cultural activity rallygoers are part of, not to mention the communities they come from.

Yet if you knock on almost any door and make people comfortable, they will begin to trust you and let you in on little secrets. Poems they’ve written. Drawings they’ve done. Songs they’ve recorded. Films they’ve made on their cell phones. Reach into the small towns, the churches, the car clubs, the fields and the factories, the jails, the card games, the high schools, the fast food joints, and you’ll be blown away by the hurricane of self-expression you will find. There are tens of millions of artists in America and exponentially more worldwide.

We need them all. The one per cent who dominate the world have vast political, financial, and military power. To overcome their destructiveness, we need a truly massive number of people. To get them we need to make culture an integral part of every movement

for change. Words and images and sounds dripping from everything. The real battle humanity faces isn’t a physical one but a war of ideas and ideals, a clash of morals and mission. The winning of hearts and minds is the specific skill set of the artist and another world is possible only when legions of them are mobilized and linked into one organic diversity.

To make that happen, artists can’t be relegated to the role of mere supporters or, even worse, last resort ATMs to be fought over by competing causes. Artists are not separate. Artists have the same problems as everyone else. Unemployment. Foreclosure. Student loans. Lack of health care. Police brutality. They are different only in that they seldom become organizational leaders because they are too busy doing art. That’s what makes them important, not what makes them marginal.

But what can the movement do for the artists? I often ask my musician friends: Would you rather play yet another show in a nightclub for just your girlfriend or your buddies or would you rather play for a community organization that will give you its rapt attention? The movement can give artists a priceless gift: respect for what they do.

Respected or not, artists are forced into competition with each other. Competition for gigs. For grants. For attention. Does this mean they are bad, selfish people? Not at all. We live in a society which values only the bottom line and could care less about the need for self-expression. Competition grows from the fact that the resources and audiences artists need are deliberately withheld from them. The first step in rising above these limitations is to openly acknowledge that artistic competition exists instead of pretending that it doesn’t. Paradoxically, that reality check can open the door to artistic collaboration and cooperation.

It’s true that art asks, art demands, that people face up to the destruction going on around them. But there must also be an antidote to the poison, a yes



to the no. A vision of a radically different world of peace and sustainability, a world beyond money and above privilege. Otherwise audiences will eventually tune out because the message is too painful.

It's a long-standing joke that "organizing artists is like herding cats." The success of 100,000 Poets For Change makes such cynicism indeed laughable. Artists organize to create their work, to rehearse it, to present it, to record or to film it. They organize to get the resources they need to create. They are not some hopeless mass of well-meaning losers.

That was made clear on the first weekend of April in Santa Rosa, California where an "interim" 100,000 Poets for Change event was held at the Arlene Francis Center, a festival demanded by the locals because they didn't want to wait for the third annual international festival in September. It was a panorama of poetry, paint, sound, and movement that built in numbers and intensity as the weekend wore on. It also accelerated the coming together of Santa Rosa's Anglo and Latino communities. Malinalli Lopez, board member at local bilingual radio station KBBF-FM, says that "100,000 Poets For Change represents a much needed voice that breaks down barriers among those of diverse ages, cultures, languages, and artistic communities."

One Hundred Thousand Poets for Change has gotten its flag above the international horizon but it is unique only in its geographic scope. It rests upon and is connected in spirit to countless similar efforts everywhere. The challenge that confronts them all is how to weave their gifts into the fabric of equally rapidly growing movements for peace and sustainability. **CP**

*For more information about 100,000 Poets and Musicians and Artists for Change, check out [100TPC.org](http://100TPC.org) or email [walterblue@bigbridge.org](mailto:walterblue@bigbridge.org).*

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## Chasing Hell: the Films of William Friedkin

BY KIM NICOLINI

When people think of director William Friedkin, they tend to think of "The Exorcist," the 1973 film about demonic possession that put him on the mainstream cinematic map. They picture young Linda Blair puking pea soup and abusing herself with a crucifix rather than the priest who sacrifices his life for the girl. "The Exorcist" and other Friedkin films are less about young girls coming of age and taking the devil inside their bodies and more about the geography of men and the demons that are internalized and externalized through their characters.

"The Exorcist" is largely a film about a man—Father Damian Karras (Jason Miller)—struggling with his own personal demons and going through his own (questioning his faith, his relationship to his mother, and his identity in general). The real possession takes place within Karras's tormented psyche, so it is no surprise that the film leads him to a tragic end while the girl walks away fairly unscathed.

Many see "The Exorcist" as an outsider in relation to Friedkin's films. But the movie fits right in with his other mid-career films which portray variations of masculine identity crisis within a landscape that comes damn close to Hell on Earth. "The French Connection" (1971), "Sorcerer" (1977), "Cruising" (1980), and "To Live and Die in L.A." (1985) all show men whose internal hell is materialized through the external world of the geography they occupy. The men fight, steal, die, deal, kill and chase each other as they try to outrun their own demons and master their identity in a world of hellish chaos. Questioning faith and showing the murky line between good and bad, law and crime runs through all of these films and puts the lead characters on a

perpetual chase.

Friedkin's "Sorcerer" (his adaptation of Clouzot's 1953 "Wages of Fear") embodies the epitome of the chase at its deepest level of insanity. Four men (an embezzler from Paris, a church robber from New York, a terrorist from Israel, and an assassin from Mexico) find themselves living in exile in the epicenter of Hell (an unnamed village in the Dominican Republic). The landscape is soaked with oil running through a huge pipeline. An explosion at a drilling site sends charred and bloody bodies flying and brings the four men together. They are hired to drive trucks loaded with nitroglycerin across a treacherous landscape with the intent of blowing up the site of the explosion to stop it from burning (a metaphor for the plight of the men themselves). As all the men drop dead except for the delusional Roy Scheider, he drives toward the explosion mumbling "Where am I going? Where am I going?" The answer is clearly nowhere—the same destination in other Friedkin films.

"The French Connection" and "To Live and Die in L.A." are both "landscape films." One set on the congested streets of New York and the other in the smog-suffocating geography of outer Los Angeles, they are movies about traffic—drug trafficking and money trafficking. They feature centerpiece car chases—one on the streets of Brooklyn under the elevated subway tracks and the other driving the wrong way on a congested L.A. freeway.

In his chapter on "The French Connection" in his recently published memoir *The Friedkin Connection* (HarperCollins Publishers, 2013), Friedkin writes:

"The chase' is the purest form of cinema, something that can't be done in any other medium . . . A chase must appear spontaneous and out of control, but it must be meticulously choreographed . . . The audience should not be able to foresee the outcome. It helps to have innocent bystand-

ers who could be 'hurt' or 'killed.' . . . Whether he's on horseback, behind a wheel, or on foot, the chase must be a metaphor for the lead character: reckless, brutal, obsessive or possibly even cautious."

The chase is also a metaphor for Friedkin and his particular brand of adrenaline-producing filmmaking. He doesn't just depict men on the chase in a fictional setting. Friedkin actually behaved like one of his characters as he filmed actual streets, jungles, cities, and towns. He only shot on location and incorporated the literal physical and human geography into his films. In doing so, Friedkin projected the interior of his characters onto the exterior of the real world. This approach blurred the boundaries between reality and fiction.

The chase scene in "The French Connection" is an example of Friedkin's boundary-pushing filmmaking process. Without any permits to shoot the film, Friedkin took a camera into his own hands for the final take. He got in the car and filmed the scene while the driver sped 90 mph for 26 blocks straight through Brooklyn. There were no street closures and no "extras" on the "set." There was no set. There were real traffic and pedestrians that Friedkin and his crew dodged as they flew down Stillwell.

Friedkin's films seem real and intense because they were produced under real and intense circumstances. In "The French Connection," he used real heroin and visited "shooting galleries" to see the heroin trade on the front end. In "To Live and Die in L.A.," he arranged for a counterfeiter to get paroled to teach Willem Dafoe the art of counterfeiting captured in the movie. The Feds were breathing down Friedkin's neck during filming. In "Sorcerer," "while staging a bombing in Israel, a real terrorist explosion occurred down the street. Friedkin rushed his crew and cast to the blast to capture the true intensity on film. Friedkin often put

himself, his crew and the general population at risk to produce adrenaline-fueled, documentary-style cinema.

His use of the "real" to produce a hyper intense cinema also includes people. Friedkin writes of his process: "We're going to shoot practical locations, no sets—police stations, bars, hotel rooms—and the shots have to look like they were 'stolen.'" Many of Friedkin's shots are "stolen." That's what gives his films such visceral immediacy. In "The Exorcist," when Karras goes to visit his mother in Bellvue, Friedkin filmed actual hospitalized mental patients with hidden cameras. In "Sorcerer," he captured "locals" on film giving the movie the gritty hellish economic desperation of the real geography. In "Cruising," Friedkin shot inside actual underground sex clubs. He threw Al Pacino in the middle of the "scene" where men are performing real sexual acts, forcing the extremely tense performance from Pacino. There are no "extras." Friedkin used people as part of the landscape as much as he used the streets, and his films immerse us in an experiential cinema that never feels staged.

Like *The Exorcist*, *Cruising* seems like an "outlier" film. What did a serial killer stalking gay BDSM clubs have to do with the hetero-masculinity depicted in "The French Connection," "Sorcerer," and "To Live and Die in L.A.?" Friedkin says of "Cruising," "To me it's just a murder mystery, with the gay leather scene as a backdrop. On another level it's about identity: do any of us really know who it is sitting next to us, or looking back at us in the mirror?"

Questioning the identity of the man in the mirror is at the core of many Friedkin's films. The gay men in "Cruising" are not the effeminate gay men that were the Hollywood norm. The leather underground shows (gay) men hyper-performing masculinity—dressed as construction workers, prison guards, and cops. In one self-reflexive scene, the undercover Al Pacino

lands in a sex club on Cop Night and is forced to question his identity. What is he anyway? A real cop? A man in a costume? A straw dog with a badge? That same question could be asked of all the lead men in Friedkin's films. They are all confronted with an identity crisis—are they good guys, bad guys or just guys which implies they are neither?

Friedkin often "crossed the line" between ethical and legal boundaries (not unlike the characters he depicts), and his process reflects the times. These films were made during the era before censorship really put a stranglehold on media. The films are bookmarked by the Nixon and Reagan presidencies. During the Nixon years, daily news was plastered with stories of corrupt cops and governments while Reagan set the wheels in motion to put the clamps on freedom of speech. Friedkin's films slipped into this window when he was able to cross boundaries and make viscerally real cinema before it would become legally impossible to produce such films.

In his newest films "Bug" (2006) and "Killer Joe" (2011), Friedkin moves largely off the streets and indoors. These films are much more insular (depicting the insane paranoia of surveillance culture and the dysfunction of the nuclear family), but they still deliver Friedkin's vision of the world as Hell.

We've just moved into a new Hell—a sanitized, sterilized and highly censored stage of Hell. Friedkin could not make the films he made in the 70s and 80s today, but he is still finding ways to push boundaries and send us reeling. **CP**

**KIM NICOLINI** is an artist, poet and cultural critic living in Tucson, Arizona. Her writing has appeared in *Bad Subjects*, *Punk Planet*, *Souciant*, *La Furia Umana*, and *The Berkeley Poetry Review*. She recently published her first book, *Mapping the Inside Out*, in conjunction with a solo gallery show by the same name. She can be reached at [knicolini@gmail.com](mailto:knicolini@gmail.com).

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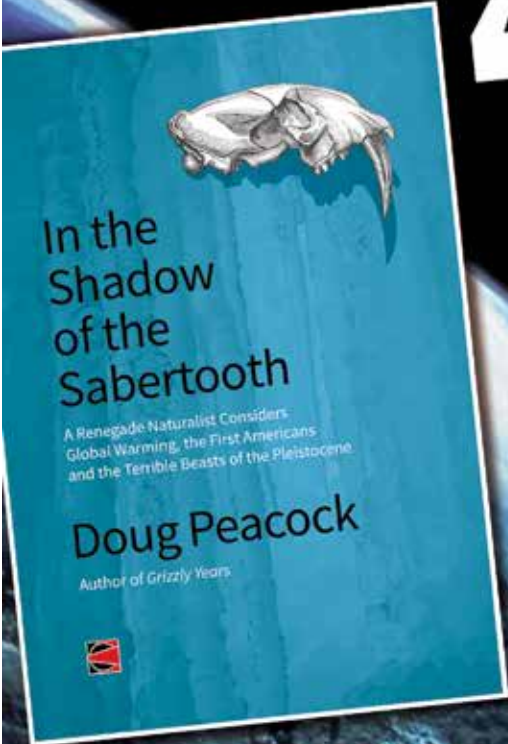
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