

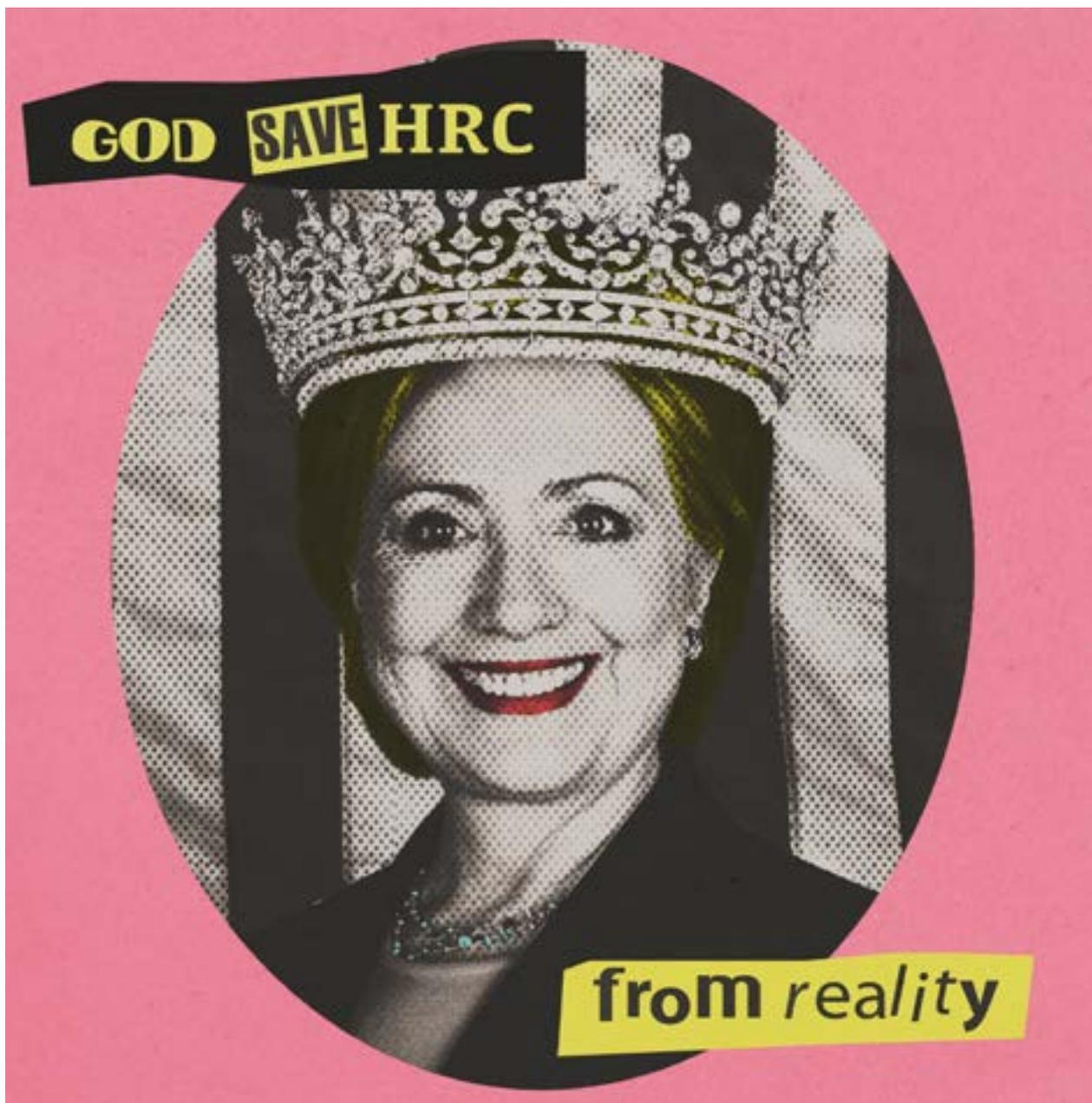
CounterPunch

RACE, INEQUALITY AND THE MURDER OF LATASHA HARLINS BY LEE BALLINGER

PAPER DRAGON: CHINA'S GAME OF SHADOWS WITH THE UNITED STATES BY PETER LEE

THE BATTLE OVER PAT TILLMAN: A TEN YEAR RETROSPECTIVE BY DAVID HOELSCHER

YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE A ROCKET SCIENTIST TO BE A ROCKET SCIENTIST BY PAUL KRASSNER



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God Save HRC by Nick Roney.

In Memory of
Alexander Cockburn
1941-2012



TABLE OF CONTENTS

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR4

ARTICLES

LA Confidential: Race, Inequality and the Murder of Latasha Harlins

BY LEE BALLINGER..... 10

Paper Dragon: China's Game of Shadows with the United States

BY PETER LEE 14

The Battle Over Pat Tillman: a Ten Year Retrospective

BY DAVID HOELSCHER..... 20

CULTURE & REVIEWS

You Don't Have to Be a Rocket Scientist to be a Rocket Scientist

BY PAUL KRASSNER 25

COLUMNS

Roaming Charges 5

Poor, Poor Pitiful Me

BY JEFFREY ST. CLAIR

Hillary's rags-to-riches story.

Diamonds and Rust 6

This is Your War on Oprah

BY JOANN WYPIJEWSKI

What's crazier than Bowe Bergdahl?

Empire Burlesque 7

This Wheel's on Fire

BY CHRIS FLOYD

The Terror War's disastrous course.

Grasping at Straws 8

So Much for the Free Market

BY MIKE WHITNEY

Central Bank meddling has led to "state capitalism".

Daydream Nation. 9

Lawyers, Guns and Money

BY KRISTIN KOLB

Silver bullets on the shop floor.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Great Readers

Hi Josh and Jeff,
You've got (as you know anyway) some great readers. Rev. Ed King read my *Freedom Summer* piece on Monday and wrote that the day before a memorial service was held at a Methodist church deep in Neshoba county for Schwerner-Cheney--Goodman, their deaths commemorated every year (now 50th anniversary). John Lewis was the main speaker. Rev. King, you may remember, was one of the leaders of the MS Freedom Democratic Party that sought representation at the '64 Dem. convention (and was stabbed-in-the-back by Hubert Humphrey and fellow liberals). My continued thanks to you both--and everyone else making CP possible--for keeping the spirit of radicalism alive. NOW NEEDED MORE THAN EVER.

Norm Pollack

We Have to Try

Joshua Frank,
I thought your piece on fracking was one of the best I've read yet, and I've read many. I don't know how many arguments there are against it, the poisoning of deep aquifers that will harm future generations who will need that water, the sickness many complain of from airborne particles, etc., but the psychopaths who invest transnationally are willing to finish off any chance for the survival of the species if only they can make the last dime from peddling fossil fuels

before civilization tanks. Education could save us, but we don't have the mainstream press, who have control of the brains of the masses. Thank you for trying, I believe we have to try.

Jack Balkwill

Peerless

I had been reading Mr. Cockburn since *The Village Voice* days, and I followed his trail to CounterPunch. Mr. St. Clair took the baton and continues the excellent tradition. CounterPunch readers disagree on many subjects, I am sure, but I hazard a guess that we can all agree that Mr. Cockburn is without peer.

Patrick Barr

A Consistent Source

Thank you for featuring Mike Whitney's article *Black Flags Over Mosul* and for being a consistent source of fact-based reporting from around the world.

*Ray Gabriel
Salida, Colo.*

False Advocates

Naming the plight of the poor is not sufficient. Organizing the poor is what it will take. Unfortunately, San Francisco's advocates for the poor are unable or unwilling to organize at a rate that is faster than the rate of evictions and displacement. One reason for this failure is the insistence of advocates to both patronize the poor and to presume that the poor are incapable of articulating their own agenda. My

experience working on local planning task forces and other appointed bodies is that the poor are well capable of speaking and acting for themselves. But many of the advocates are paid to ensure that this never happens.

Marc Solomon

US Injustice System

It was chilling and agonizing just reading St. Clair's piece on the Lockett execution. The nauseating reality of US "Injustice" System leaves one aghast and some what empty. I felt empty reading that. I am not sure if "empty" is a right word, may be "drained" is a better word.

Susan Nevens

Worse Than Bush?

Obama's a master at talking in grandiose terms and either doing the opposite of what he said he'd do or nothing at all. What a lousy waste of 8 years. In a way, the guy is worse than George W. Bush because we knew what we were getting with Bush.

Tim Withee

The Ravings of Isaiah

In the 1980s, when we finally terminated our TV, we used to read Alex's "Beat the Devil" columns aloud at dinner. I remember once he referred to "the ravings of Isaiah," so we got the Bible out, from fiction under "g," and read that out loud to great applause and laughter. When the Nation shrank his column, we stopped subscribing. Never met him,

but he was part of our life and of multitude others. Happy birthday, Alex.

Luciana Bohn

Wavelengths

Now that I've got so much experience at losing people, I realize that you can grieve heavily for those you knew only slightly. You grieve for the friendship you didn't have, you miss the conversations you could have had. If only I'd known Gabriel Kolko was in Amsterdam I would have looked him up. I knew him slightly through the disarmament group at Harvard, we were always on the same wavelength, he was nine years older (I read in his obit)...

All these years I thought he was still in Toronto. I don't find my to-do list. I can't find my glasses don't look for me in the vanguard, baby look for me in the masses.

Fred Gardner

What About the Victims?

I'm a progressive. I voted for Obama twice, though reluctantly. I read CounterPunch everyday. But I must say St. Clair's essay on Clayton Lockett was misguided and insulting. Lockett's victims suffered much more pain than he did. He deserved to be put to death. I don't shed any tears for such monsters. The Left needs to be on the side of the victims.

Lynn Walters



ROAMING CHARGES

Poor, Poor Pitiful Me

BY JEFFREY ST. CLAIR

Pity Hillary. Evicted from her home, jobless, and, as she evocatively put it to Diane Sawyer, “dead broke.” Such were the perilous straits of the Clinton family in the early winter months of 2001, as they packed their belongings at the White House, and scurried away like refugees from Washington toward a harsh and uncertain future.

“We came out of the White House not only dead broke, but in debt,” Hillary recalled. “We had no money when we got there, and we struggled to, you know, piece together the resources for mortgages, for houses, for Chelsea’s education. You know, it was not easy.”

Hillary was on the cusp of middle age and, at this point, for all practical purposes a single mother. She hadn’t had a paying job in years and the prospects of resurrecting her law career were dim. She was emotionally drained, physically debilitated and hounded wherever she went by the dark forces of the right. All in all, her prospects on that cold January morning were grave.

With no life-ring to cling to, Hillary was forced to work furiously to save her family from a Dickensian existence of privation and destitution. Though she spared Sawyer the harrowing details, we can recreate some of her most grueling tasks. This meant giving several speeches a week to demanding audiences for \$200,000 a pop, burning the midnight oil to complete her book so that she wouldn’t have to return her \$8 million advance, booking Bill’s speeches at \$500,000 an appearance and scrutinizing Bill’s \$10 million book contract for any troublesome pitfalls. There were also those tedious documents to sign for Bill’s \$200,000 presidential pension and her own \$20,000 annual pension for her term as First Lady.

There was also that rather irksome

request from Banker’s Trust that Hillary authorize them to accept for deposit \$1.35 million from a certain Terry McAuliffe to secure the Clintons’ loan to purchase a five-bedroom house in Chappaqua, New York. She was also tasked with itemizing the \$190,000 worth of gifts for the family’s new home that flooded into the White House during the last cruel weeks of the Clinton presidency and arranging moving vans for the \$28,000 of White House furnishings the family took with them to their new digs in New York.

But Hillary put her nose to the grindstone. She didn’t complain. She didn’t apply for unemployment compensation or food stamps. She simply devoted herself feverishly to the tasks at hand and over the course the next few months the Clinton’s fraught condition began to improve rather dramatically.

By the end of 2001, the Clintons owned two homes: the \$5.95 million Dutch Colonial in Chappaqua and the \$2.85 Georgian mansion in DC. Her deft management of the family finances allowed the displaced couple’s bank accounts to swell to more than \$20 million. A carefully nourished blind trust also fattened to more than \$5 million. In twelve short months, their net worth grew to a fortune of more than \$35 million. The Clintons’ rapid reversal of fortune was almost as stunning as Hillary’s miraculous adventures in the commodity market in the 1980s, when with a little guidance from broker R.L. “Red” Bone, she shrewdly turned a \$1000 investment in cattle futures into a \$100,000 payday.

One might call the Clintons’ economic odyssey an American morality tale. It is the story of how a besieged family, staggered by the loss of a home, suddenly without an income and pursued

by creditors, can pull themselves up from the gutter through persistence and hard work.

This exemplary narrative of self-salvation must have confirmed in HRC’s mind the righteousness of her decision in 1996 to run interference for Bill’s drive to demolish the federal welfare system. In that fateful season, Hillary assiduously lobbied liberal groups, including her old outfit the Children’s Defense Fund, to embrace the transformative power of austerity for poor women and children.

Over the next four years, more than six million poor families were pitched off the welfare rolls, left with only their own ingenuity to keep them from being chewed apart by the merciless riptides of the neoliberal economy. Politicians cheered the shrinking of the welfare state. Hillary boasted of moving millions from a life of dependency toward an enchanting new era of personal responsibility and economic opportunity.

But what really happened to those marginalized families, did the village rush in to help rear those millions of destitute kids, suddenly deprived of even a few meager dollars a month for food and shelter? Hardly. In 1995, more than 70 percent of poor families with children received some kind of cash assistance. By 2010, less than 30 percent got any kind of cash aid and the amount of the benefit had declined by more than 50 percent from pre-reform levels. During the depths of the current recession, when the poverty level nearly doubled, welfare rolls scarcely budged at all and even dropped in some states.

More savagely, most of those “liberated” from the welfare system didn’t ascend into the middle class, but fell sharply into the chasm of extreme poverty, trying desperately to live on an income of less than \$2 a day.

Still \$2 a day is better off than being “dead broke.” Indeed, those forlorn mothers can always put down their last few bucks on the futures market. After all, as HRC reminds us, children are the future. **CP**



DIAMONDS AND RUST

This is Your War on Oprah

BY JOANN WYPIJEWSKI

It is always the character of the soldier and not the war that fascinates. Always the personal story, the letters home, the childhood records or found diaries, that are scanned for clues as to why Specialist Graner made a pyramid of naked men, or PFC England posed with prisoners, or Private Manning disclosed secrets, or Private Bergdahl walked away from his post in Afghanistan in 2009.

It is always the sickness of the soldier that comes before the bar, whether in an actual court of law or the bland prose of an internal investigation or a media boomlet of the kind that made Bergdahl's spectral visage upon release from Taliban captivity ubiquitous until the open wound of Iraq bled all over the front page again, displacing him.

Naturally, personal stories are alluring. People have been reading them since Herodotus traveled the known world, piecing together histories from the tales of kings and their fatal pride, warriors and their cunning or miscalculation, gods and their tricky oracles.

In Herodotus, though, individual drama raises the curtain on collective drama, the story of a people. Today's typical soldier story is, like the veteran, on its own. At best, it evokes herd emotion of the sort that Oprah symbolizes – a tear for the damaged young soul, a quivering smile if he, she, overcomes adversity to rejoin the great national talk show of forgetting.

Bergdahl has a long road toward such overcoming, if he even wants it. He has been damned and praised and pitied by his countryfolk, labeled Traitor, Hero, Fragile, Nutter. Now something strange in the form of beliefnet's Matthew Currie, who says all that misses the point; the stars had it in for him.

It's not often the occult is useful po-

litically, but let's take Currie's charmingly dada column "Oh My Stars!" as our oracle, and his astral reading – Bowe with "Jupiter in Pisces, trine Pluto in Scorpio, square Saturn in Sagittarius, and sextile Mars and Neptune in Capricorn" experiencing "his Saturn Square and transiting Saturn opposite his Jupiter," while "Neptune prepares to station and go retrograde on top of [his] Jupiter" – as the code to unlocking something deeply true (or not; oracles spoke enigmatically so as always to have an out). What does it mean?

Things were bound to fall apart. Saturn ordained Bergdahl's crisis, and then Neptune, ruler of delusion, determined that life would "get a little weird." In other words, the fault was in his stars, not in himself. Put differently: in the nature of things, the nature of war.

Bowe Bergdahl might have been a little weird, and, when he walked away, remote from all rational decision-making except that which led to suicide. There was no way out but mountains and fine powder dunes beyond the village of Yaya Kheyl. But, then, psychically, there was no way out of his station, either, except, as he wrote, compromise with "the horror of self-righteous arrogance" that is the US military project around the world. He had read Atlas Shrugged. He had studied the maps. He carried only a canteen, a knife, a camera, a diary. He may have fantasized himself an adventurer, but before he left, he'd shipped his important effects home, and wrote a friend as if foretelling his death.

The friend said later he never should have gone to war, and he shouldn't have. He had got a psych discharge from Coast Guard basic training in 2006. He told friends he'd faked crazy. He was already disturbed when the

Army signed him two years later and deployed him to Afghanistan, as he tried to hold on, writing in his journal: "I will not lose this mind, this world I have deep inside. I will not lose this passion of beauty." A few months later, surrounded by beige and the madness of his circumstance, he filled two pages with the words "velcro or zipper/velcro or zipper/velcro or zipper."

It is easy to say Bergdahl was insane. The next step is to demand an investigation into why the Army let him in. But we know the answer to that. The wars needed bodies. It mattered less and less if those bodies were dim-witted, violent or "fragile." The Army knew his record, knew that he emblemized exploitation at a time when few wanted to join up. Why Bergdahl joined is a question to which there are no good answers, but so much swirls in the minds of the young, hoping to prove themselves, craving identity, making the worst of all choices. It, too, is the wrong question.

What is sanity or madness? Literature bulges with the madman as seer, but no altered state is required to comprehend what is crazier: Bowe Bergdahl or an insane situation presumed to be rational? Recruitment via video games; basic training to become de-individualized, a cog in a super-machine, to suffer humiliation if weak or injured, to kill; then deployment, behind the wire, armed to the teeth, afraid of children, afraid of everything, pretending not to be afraid, pretending to be tough, "Army Strong"; boredom, the long beige, punctuated by sudden bloodletting, a child dead in the street, mockery, then rage, you with your armor, your big guns, no match for an IED. Anyone could have ruptured; Bergdahl was anyone.

Now that he has been shuffled off the news, there will likely be no drive to study either his last message home before walking – "I am sorry for everything. The horror that is america is disgusting" – or the government's long indifference toward a POW, whose negotiated freedom before Election 2012, officials worried, might have become "Obama's Willie Horton moment." **CP**



EMPIRE BURLESQUE

This Wheel's On Fire

BY CHRIS FLOYD

The red wheel of the “War on Terror” – which under the guiding hand of the Nobel prince of peace has mutated into a hydra-headed War on Everything and Everybody Everywhere All the Time – continues on its reckless, destructive way, bringing ruin to the present and sowing disaster for the future.

The Middle East, home of four of the world's most volatile religions – Islam, Judaism, Christianity and Petrochemical Extremism – is now more unstable and violent than it has been for decades, perhaps centuries. American-led military interventions have laid waste to two societies – Iraq and Libya – and spread violent extremism throughout the region, and deep into Africa. Washington, working closely with its beloved ally – the repressive, head-chopping, woman-hating propagator of retrograde religious extremism, Saudi Arabia – is now working relentlessly to turn Syria into a hellhole of ungovernable chaos dominated by warlords.

At every single turn, without exception, the “War on Terror” and its successor have exacerbated the problems they are ostensibly designed to quell. The depredations of these morally insane (but immensely profitable) enterprises have radicalized multitudes of people across the world, destroying whole nations, blighting the future of generations, driving many to outrage and despair, prey to ideologies that promise revenge, retribution, a new beginning. Al Qaeda – the supposed Great Satan of our Terror Warriors – is now far more powerful than ever. Once a handful of cranks controlling a few compounds in remote Afghanistan, al Qaeda-associated groups now control vast swathes of territory in Iraq, Syria,

and Yemen. The Pakistani Taliban, once restricted to distant border regions, now launches attacks in the urban heart of the country. Groups like Boko Haram feast on the weapons unleashed by the West's destruction of the Libyan state, and on the despair engendered by the corruption, repression and hopelessness imposed on Nigeria by Petrochemical Extremism. There are many more examples of this pernicious dynamic.

We are told this War on Everything is a war to defend “our values”: democracy, liberty, tolerance, justice. Yet at every single turn, without exception, every single day, day in, day out, year after year, our Terror Warriors show the world that their “values” – which they claim are “our” values, the values of Western civilization – bring nothing but death, grief, corruption, repression, extremism, injustice. To those on the receiving end of the Terror War – and we're talking of millions upon millions of people – “Western civilization” has become a thing of dread and loathing. Nothing has subverted and denigrated the image of “Western values” more than the bipartisan Terror War. It is itself the greatest sustained attack on “Western values,” on “our way of life,” that we have seen in generations.

And this is true not only in regard to the image of Western values that the Terror War has shown to the world, but also in the way that it has been brought home against the West's own populations, especially in the United States and Britain. It is an indisputable fact that Americans and Britons are less free than before, to a marked degree: more heavily policed in what they say and do, in what they can publish and read, where they can go and can't go; subject to a level of pervasive, invasive sur-

veillance far beyond the dreams of the KGB or Gestapo; subject to arbitrary detention – or even, at the President's order, extrajudicial assassination, if accused in secret of some nebulous connection to terrorism. The physical and social infrastructure of their societies are crumbling, as massive resources are redirected to sustain the gargantuan military/security apparatus and “project dominance” around the world. (And of course, another aim of this unprecedented redistribution is to starve the welfare state in order to feed the rich, whose wealth grows ever greater in a system sustained by Terror War.)

Far from “draining the swamp” of extremist-spawning elements, the continual interventions and drone strikes and death squads and subversions of the West's Terror War have toxified the “swamp” beyond all measuring. Whole generations are now being raised in these conditions of howling chaos, of death and ruin and rejection and despair, with violent extremism on all sides, teaching them every day that this is the way of the world, this is the *only* way of the world. As Hamlet said: it is not nor it cannot come to good.

Yet still the wheel rolls on – toward ever greater dangers. For the War on Everything and Everyone is just that; it's not restricted to the Middle East, or to Africa, or to wherever Muslims dwell. Under the wise guidance of the Nobel-belaurelled One in the White House, the Red Wheel is now “pivoting” toward Asia, trying ever more frantically to thwart the threat to Western dominance posed by the rise of China. It's “pivoting” toward the underbelly of Russia, and pressing Western military power right up to the Russian frontier. Western elites are playing with Promethean fire – and have demonstrated, over and over again, that they have no vision, no restraint, no thought for the consequences of their actions.

We have seen unbearable horrors so far; but we may yet see horrors beyond description, beyond all imagining. **CP**



GRASPING AT STRAWS

So Much for the Free Market

BY MIKE WHITNEY

Central banks around the world have been loading up on financial assets on a scale never seen before. According to a recently released report by the OMFIF, global central banks and public sector institutions now account for an eye-watering “\$29.1trillion worth of investments ... in 162 countries.”

Naturally, all that money dumped into stocks and other financial assets has sent prices into the stratosphere, where they will likely stay unless the banks start unwinding their bloated balance sheets. But don't hold your breath. The Fed, for one, is having a hard time just reducing its monthly asset purchases, let alone whittling down the prodigious stockpile of unwanted stocks and bonds it has collected over the last 5 years. The big fear is that if the banks put these assets up for auction, it will lead to a sharp correction or worse. That means they'll have to hold on to these turkeys for the foreseeable future, increasing the probability of heavy losses that will be shrugged off onto taxpayers who are still digging out from the Great Recession.

News of the Global Public Investor (GPI) 2014 report first surfaced in an article in the *Financial Times* that was widely circulated on the Internet. Bloggers were all over it from the moment the article appeared on June 15, citing facts from the piece to support their belief that the market is rigged. Given the data the OMFIF produced in their press release alone, that belief is fairly well-founded. It's impossible to calculate where valuations would be at the present time absent the persistent meddling of central banks. And what's so worrisome about these interventions is that investors now take them for granted, in fact, judging by the

scary lack of volatility, investors seem to think that prices will never fall again, that we've reached a “permanently high plateau,” and that any downturn will be met immediately with massive injections of central bank reserves. And maybe they are right, after all, the Fed and its fellow CBs show no sign of taking their foot off the gas anytime soon.

The OMFIF's press release suggests that the experimental monetary policies that were introduced following the Financial Crisis have changed the system to what the author calls state capitalism. “Whether or not this trend is a good thing”, he opines, “may be open to question. What is incontestable is that it has happened”. This basic fact is generally ignored by fund managers and investment bankers who like to pat themselves on the back for their brilliance in “calling the bottom” in 2009 and for riding the five-year rally to record highs.

The truth is, as the report implies, that radical easing and asset purchases have been the biggest factors in the unprecedented rise in stock prices. This isn't a case where analyzing earnings reports, crunching numbers or sifting through the data, really made much of a difference. What mattered most was whether one understood the awesome power of central banks to reverse the direction of markets. Grasping that one point, and placing one's bets accordingly, turned out to be the difference between winners and the losers. So much for the “free market.”

The problem going forward is going to be adjusting to the new system. As of yet, no one seems to have made the connection between central bank intervention and the deepening stagnation

of the real economy, between bloated bank balance sheets and widening inequality, between supply side monetary remedies and the steady unraveling of the social safety net. All of these are the inevitable offshoots of state capitalism, a system that shapes policy in a way that best serves the interests of wealthy industrialists, bankers and corporations.

So, let's state the obvious: There's no going back. The sums of money are too huge, the path forward is too uncertain, and the political will to reform the system is just not there. The system could have been fixed, but it wasn't fixed, and now the market clearing mechanism is kaput. In other words, it's too late. That means policymakers will have no choice but to use the same strategies they have been using for the last 6 years, over and over again, albeit with diminishing effect. And there's the rub: If asset prices stay inflated, then profits from those assets will continue to go disproportionately to the wealthy who typically recycle them into more stocks and bonds thereby boosting rents on the real economy, increasing economic stagnation, and forcing more cutbacks in public spending. It's a vicious circle.

This “trickle up” monetary policy comes at a heavy cost to the rest of society. The lack of interest income from zero rates alone has cost savers and retirees over \$600 billion in the last few years. All of that money would have been circulated in the economy where the extra spending would have created more jobs, more activity, and stronger growth.

As it is, the policy has only fueled another catastrophic asset-price bubble that will eventually burst, paving the way for more bailouts, more austerity and lower standards of living.

Well-meaning reformers still think that we can gradually end CB intervention and return to the golden days of free market capitalism, but it's not going to happen. When the system can't be fixed, it's time to change the system. **CP**



DAYDREAM NATION

Lawyers, Guns and Money

BY KRISTIN KOLB

Late spring, afternoon doldrums, and I was a student at Jefferson City High School reciting Latin conjugations: “*Sum, es, est. Sumus, estes, sunt!*”

“Louder!”

My teacher was a delightful former Army sergeant. I was anticipating my first summer exploring the world outside flat-minded Cole County, scholarships in hand to study at someplace called Simon’s Rock College located in someplace called the Berkshires, and then off to build trails in a national park in Texas. Lilacs and honeysuckle bloomed.

“Do, das, dat!”

“POP!” A noise echoed. Silence. Sirens.

Over the loud speaker, the principal ordered students outside. This is not the fire drill we’d prepped for, and certainly not a tornado, the most feared calamity on our list.

A boy my age, seventeen, opened his locker before Shop, shoved a handgun in his backpack, and midway through class, stuck it in his mouth and pulled; classmates and teacher were the spectators.

This was 1991, before lock downs or metal detectors in schools. I don’t remember the boy’s name and the local paper’s archive only holds articles back to 1999. It’s just a memory.

A year and a half later, I was living in a co-operative in Ohio. I’d spent the previous academic year at Simon’s Rock. Of the 300 or so students, we were mostly a creative and intellectually dynamic bunch, taking interdisciplinary seminars on critical thinking, and happy to let the world hum along while we ate wild strawberries and read the classics.

Most kids there were misfits of the

lonely, wealthy sort. And there were happy, hippie kids, with family who threw themselves into supporting alternative education for their children. One young artist was Galen Gibson, who taught me how to use a power drill, and shook a thick, curly, waist-long mane.

Those of us not from the Eastern seaboard were often lonely, too, far from homes that limited us. One was Wayne Lo from Montana, a violinist and child of Taiwanese immigrants who enjoyed hardcore punk.

And so, in December 1992, I watched the news during my dinner, halfway between my hometown and my former school in Massachusetts, as Dan Rather reported that Lo had bought a semi-automatic rifle for \$150 and roamed the Simon’s Rock campus. He killed two people and wounded four others. His mind had twisted into a political poison of Neo-Nazism. I dropped my plate and it broke. My friend, Galen, was dead, at age 18.

This was the first school shooting to make the big news. From there, we know how many more mass deaths – too many.

My point is not to rehash the past for your salivation, a morbid memoirist. It’s to illustrate how – if you haven’t yet – you very likely will become a mourner of dead children in the gun violence that is now so commonplace it takes at least a dozen corpses to make a brief internet headline. Or you’ll know a perpetrator, family member or friend, whose head broke and the hounds of hell possessed, ammo on sale at Wal-Mart.

You can sell a bicycle or a laptop for a gun pretty much anywhere. I lived near one such business, Liquor, Guns and Ammo, a store memorialized in an

Uncle Tupelo song. It even had a drive-through to double-fist your beer and your bullets. “Liquor and guns, the sign says quite plain. Somehow life goes on in a place so insane.”

After the Sandy Hook shooting, the NRA stalked the mental health lobby, a feeble grouping historically ignored by Congress. In fact, four months after Sandy Hook, we hear this from Linda Rosenberg, the president of the National Council for Community Behavioral Care, via *The New York Times*: “This is our moment. I hate the connection between gun violence and the need for better mental health care, but sometimes you have to take what you can get.”

President Obama joined the chorus of support and the NRA, with its strategically perfect aim, shot a bull’s eye: Honor the sick and avoid gun safety laws. Since Sandy Hook, we’ve grieved over 75 mass shootings in the United States – it’s the same time frame between the two school shootings that marked my adolescence. I tally events, not bodies.

Recently, *The Onion* joked in a headline, “Nation Wondering Why Struggling Mental Health System Can’t Just Pull Itself Together.” That was about a week after the two most recent school shootings here in the Northwest. Seattle Pacific University: One dead, three injured. Suburban Portland: One dead, three injured.

Yes, the forgotten boy who died at my high school was troubled. Yes, Wayne Lo was hearing voices. But how does a cashier sell an 18 year old a semi-automatic weapon without an ounce of curiosity or lament?

Then again, every day, we give guns, and now drone controls, to equally young men and women, equally innocent and fragile, to do our country’s bidding. It seems almost logical to smell blood in the school library and on the shop room floor. In another institution, the United States Capitol, that stench is only overpowered by the sweet scent of money. **CP**

LA Confidential

Race, Inequality and the Murder of Latasha Harlins

BY LEE BALLINGER

On the morning of March 16, 1991, two weeks before Rodney King was beaten by police, Latasha Harlins entered the Empire Liquor Market in South Central Los Angeles. Standing behind the counter was Soon Ja Du. Du worked up to fourteen hours a day and she suffered from migraines. The store had been robbed more than thirty times, including the previous Saturday.

In *Can't Stop Won't Stop: A History of the Hip-Generation*, Jeff Chang describes what happened next: "Harlins had spent the night at a friend's place and as she walked home, she decided to purchase a bottle of orange juice for breakfast. She put it in her backpack and went to the counter to pay for it. Du grabbed Harlins' sweater and screamed, 'You bitch, you are trying to steal my orange juice! That's my orange juice!' Harlins yelled back, 'Bitch, let me go! I'm trying to pay for it'.

In the video, the two are pulling on the bottle of orange juice. Harlins swings at Du a few times and then backs away. The bottle falls to the floor. Du picks up a stool and throws it over the counter at Harlins. The girl ducks and reaches down to pick up the bottle. She places the bottle on the counter. Du swipes it away. She has unholstered the gun. Harlins pivots and prepares to step away. Du has raised the gun. Harlins shudders and falls out of the frame.

The cost of the juice was \$1.79. Court records would later show that Latasha Harlins had two one dollar bills in her possession.

The story of this deadly confrontation is fleshed out in UCLA professor Brenda Stevenson's excellent new book, *The Contested Murder of Latasha Harlins*. It begins as the story of two countries and two immigrant paths taken by two women to one city—Los Angeles.

The Harlins family came from the deep South where their ancestors had been slaves. They moved to East St. Louis where a daughter, Latasha, was born on New Year's Day in 1976. In the early 1980s the family moved to South Central Los Angeles, where they found better weather and, in theory, better prospects. But in 1985, nine-year-old Latasha's mother Crystal was shot and killed by another woman in an early morning bar fight.

On the other side of the world, Soon Ja Du entered adolescence during the Korean War. She grew up in the midst of great violence, her country devastated by a conflict which left millions dead and the nation divided. Soon Ja's home province of North Chungcheong was the site of the Bodo League

Massacre in 1950, where tens of thousands of political prisoners, as well as civilian men, women, and children, were executed by the Rhee government.

Latasha Harlins grew into adolescence in a Los Angeles neighborhood marked by violent crime and police brutality. Yet she became an honor student, an athlete, and a camp counselor.

35-year-old Soon Ja Du and her family arrived in California in the year that Latasha Harlins was born. In her native South Korea, Du had been a doctor's daughter and the educated wife of an Army officer. Coming to America, she worked outside the home for the first time—at factory jobs and then as a mainstay at the Empire Liquor Market her husband had purchased in South Central LA.

*Dear Lord if ya hear me, tell me why
Little girl like Latasha, she had to die*

—Tupac

The killing was seen as racial by many. "Girls who knew Latasha Harlins [in high school] reported in grief counseling after her murder that they felt harassed when they walked into a Korean-owned store," Stevenson writes. "'All of these kids have felt like victims,' school psychologist Barbara Snader said. 'They walk into a store and felt like people suspect them...looking them up and down. It's a very humiliating experience. It's like they're guilty because they're black.'"

The focus on racial motives increased when, shortly after Latasha Harlins' death, a black man named Lee Arthur Mitchell was also shot and killed in a local Korean-owned liquor store, this time in a dispute over 25 cents. No charges were filed.

Korean immigrants' negative attitudes toward blacks were ingrained before they reached the shores of the United States. In Korea, they observed the American military, whose presence was accompanied by segregated restaurants, bars, and brothels and by the concentration of black soldiers at the border with North Korea while white soldiers had easier assignments in Seoul.

The racism in the U.S. military eventually found a reflection in Korean culture. Stevenson writes: "Whether it is an entertainer in blackface imitating R&B singers or a commercial to sell fried chicken that features Africans in tribal clothing about to physically assault a Korean man until he whips out a bucket of delicious chicken, the message is the same: blacks are different, and that difference indicates inferiority."

These attitudes hardened as nineteen Korean-American grocers in Los Angeles were killed working behind their counters in the 1980s.

Seven months after the death of Latasha Harlins and six months to the day before the outbreak of the LA rebellion, Ice Cube's album, *Death Certificate*, hit the streets. On the song

“Black Korea” Ice Cube rapped about boycotting and burning down Korean businesses and did so with extremely offensive lyrics.

Yet despite all the conflict, blacks and Koreans actually have a very inter-connected history.

The U.S. civil rights movement created a political space such that the passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act was closely followed by legislation which opened U.S. shores to significant Asian immigration for the first time. As a result, LA’s Korean community quickly grew to half a million people. Meanwhile, the civil rights movement broke the bonds of sharecropping with the result that Southern emigrants increased LA’s black population from 63,000 in 1940 to 736,000 in 1970.

During the Vietnam War, 4,678 troops from Korea were killed in Vietnam, as were 7,241 American blacks. There were other blood-drenched ties – the U.S. Army suppressed uprisings in both the U.S. and Korea. First, the Watts rebellion in Los Angeles in 1965. Then, in 1980, the revolt in Kwangju, Korea in which two thousand Koreans died in an insurrection against the ascendance of military general Chun Doo Hwan to the South Korean presidency. At the time the South Korean military was officially under the operational control of the U.S. Army.

In an article about their 1993 telegram campaign against the presence of U.S. troops in South Korea, a Young Koreans United member wrote: “Korean Americans see a direct connection between the presence of U.S. troops in Korea and the lack of funds for domestic programs in Los Angeles.”

While these connections between blacks and Koreans were somewhat indirect, they were accompanied by others that were very direct. Korea was a colony of Japan from 1910 to 1945 and one result was that over 1.1 million Koreans were conscripted to work in mining, construction, and other branches of manual labor throughout Japan. After World War II and the end of the colonial relationship, Koreans living in Japan were denied the rights of citizenship and blocked from jobs, education, and welfare benefits. Inspired to a great degree by the U.S. civil rights movement, the Koreans in

Japan, known as *zainichi*, began a long battle for equality.

As part of that movement, the writings of Martin Luther King were translated and studied, as were books such as *God of the Oppressed* by black liberation theologian James Cone. Cone traveled to Japan to speak and lend support while U.S. blacks contributed money to the cause through their churches. When the Korean Christian Church in Japan held a meeting called “A Strategic Missionary Meeting on Minority People,” U.S. blacks, Native Americans, and Mexican Americans attended.

All these connections serve as part of the backstory for the divisive trial of Soon Ja Du, which Brenda Stevenson uses to expand her narrative into a feminine triangle, the third leg of which is the judge, Joyce Karlin.

Joyce Karlin was born in Los Angeles in 1951. Her father was a former military intelligence officer who became a wealthy Hollywood executive, eventually president of Warner Brothers International. Movie stars came to the Karlin home for parties and young Joyce hung out on the set of *Ben Hur* in Rome.

At the time of the trial, Joyce Karlin was married to William Fahey, another prosecutor, who in 1992 unsuccessfully ran for Congress while he chaired the Bush/Quayle campaign in Los Angeles County. As a Superior Court judge, Karlin was paid more than a U.S. Supreme Court justice. The prosecutor

duo lived in a big house in Manhattan Beach, an oceanfront outpost favored by professional athletes. Joyce Karlin was later elected to two terms as Manhattan Beach mayor.

In due course in Joyce Karlin’s courtroom, the jury convicted Soon Ja Du of manslaughter. Probation officer Patricia Dwyer’s 39-page report stated that Du “took no action to assist the victim, exaggerated her injuries and feigned unconsciousness. This can only be viewed as a deliberate attempt to manipulate public opinion and underscores her unrepentant attitude.” Indeed, Soon Ja Du said “I would do the same thing again.” Dwyer recommended that Du serve the maximum sentence of sixteen years.

Judge Karlin ignored the report and, incredibly, gave Soon Ja Du no jail time at all. Despite the fact that Du’s unrepen-



Latasha Harlins

tance indicated she might become a repeat offender, Karlin said: “Does society need Mrs. Du to be incarcerated in order to be protected? I think not. Is state prison needed to encourage the defendant to lead a law-abiding life or isolate her so that she cannot commit other crimes? I think not.”

What if things had been reversed? What if Latasha Harlins had killed Du and said she had no regrets and that if she could she would pull the trigger again? Would she get off with no time? It’s more likely she would have gotten the sixteen years plus an extra strike for stealing orange juice.

Joyce Karlin was no rogue judge. Although sentencing records in LA County for 1990 show that every person convicted of a charge similar to Du’s received jail time, the Second District Court of Appeals unanimously upheld Karlin’s sentence.

The trial was not a simple case of white versus black. Soon Ja Du’s lawyer, Charles Lloyd, was black. He drove a Rolls Royce to court, where the centerpiece of his defense was that Du was justified in killing Harlins because of her fear of young blacks. The travesty of justice that was the Du trial represented a wealthy judge and a wealthy defense attorney against a poor murder victim.

Deeper alliances along similar lines were revealed in the wake of the trial. In 1992 the Los Angeles County Bar Association’s Criminal Justice Section awarded Joyce Karlin the title of “Trial Judge of the Year” and gave Charles Lloyd an award as “Trial Attorney of the Year.”

The Du verdict was also not a simple case of Asians versus blacks. K.W. Lee, publisher of *Korea Times*, spoke out against the verdict, pointing out that while Du got not one day for taking a human life, another Korean immigrant got a month in jail for hurting a dog. Adding insult to injury, there was a public outpouring of support for the dog, including ten thousand dollars in donations.

Not at all by coincidence, the LA rebellion began only eight days after the appeals court affirmed Karlin’s whitewash of Latasha’s murder.

Du’s *de facto* acquittal reflected the growing economic polarization in the city. At the time Latasha Harlins was killed, the mayor of Los Angeles was Tom Bradley, a former high-ranking cop and the first black elected to that position. Not only was Bradley the loyal foot soldier of Eli Broad and other billionaire developers, he was a law partner of Soon Ja Du attorney Charles Lloyd. Bradley appointed Lloyd to the LA Harbor Commission. When the Harlins family led an effort to recall Joyce Karlin, Bradley stayed out of it.

Danny Bakewell got into it. As president of the Brotherhood Crusade, Bakewell made a lot of media noise in support of Latasha Harlins but his bona fides were shaky. At the same time Latasha Harlins was gunned down, several South Central tenants in units Bakewell owned were suing him for refusing to maintain their already substandard apartments. Bakewell, who is black, owns three luxury homes and

once proclaimed that his goal was “to have an astronomical net worth.” Check that off his bucket list. Bakewell lives in Bradbury, a city of horse ranches nestled in the mountains near Los Angeles. In 2010, Bradbury’s zip code of 91008 was number one on *Forbes*’ annual list of America’s most expensive zip codes, with a median home price of \$4,276,462. While Bakewell claimed the mantle of leadership in seeking justice for Latasha, he also had a conflict of interest--Du’s lawyer Charles Lloyd was head of fundraising for Bakewell’s Brotherhood Crusade.

After the LA rebellion, poor Koreans who lost their jobs were not given one cent from the victims funds collected with great fanfare by the Korean elite. The “victims associations” formally barred the poor and mocked their desire to be compensated.

While the media touts Chinese and Koreans as “model minorities,” the reality is more complicated. In the Koreatown section of Los Angeles, Korean businessmen are notorious for their exploitation of Korean immigrant employees. LA also contains dozens of employment agencies which funnel Chinese immigrants, often undocumented, to jobs where there may be no wages, only tips. “The bosses are bad,” one Chinese worker told the *LA Times*. “They should treat other Chinese well. Instead, it’s Chinese taking advantage of Chinese.” Recently, Latino immigrants have started using the same employment agencies.

In life and in death, Latasha Harlins illuminated the class split among blacks. Teka-Lark Fleming, now publisher of the local *Morningside Park Chronicle*, went to Westchester High School with Latasha Harlins. She told me that the school was predominantly black and predominantly prosperous (actresses Regina King and Nia Long were there at the time) and that Latasha Harlins was there as a result of “economic busing.” When Latasha was killed, students were told not to talk about it. School administrators didn’t want anyone to know that poor people went to the school.

The yawning class divide in Los Angeles was summed up the night that Denise Harlins, Latasha’s aunt, interrupted an awards ceremony at the Biltmore Hotel for Charles Lloyd, shouting: “All you people sitting, applauding, over a child killer.” Joyce Karlin and Soon Ja Du’s son were there to help honor Lloyd.

Rodney King’s plaintive plea of “Can’t we all get along?” still echoes through the American psyche. Well, we can’t, in large part because unity between people who are unequal is not possible. The Korean immigrants who are able to buy liquor stores have two things most of their customers do not—college degrees and investment capital. The fact that everyone exists in the same maelstrom of violence isn’t enough to bridge that gap.

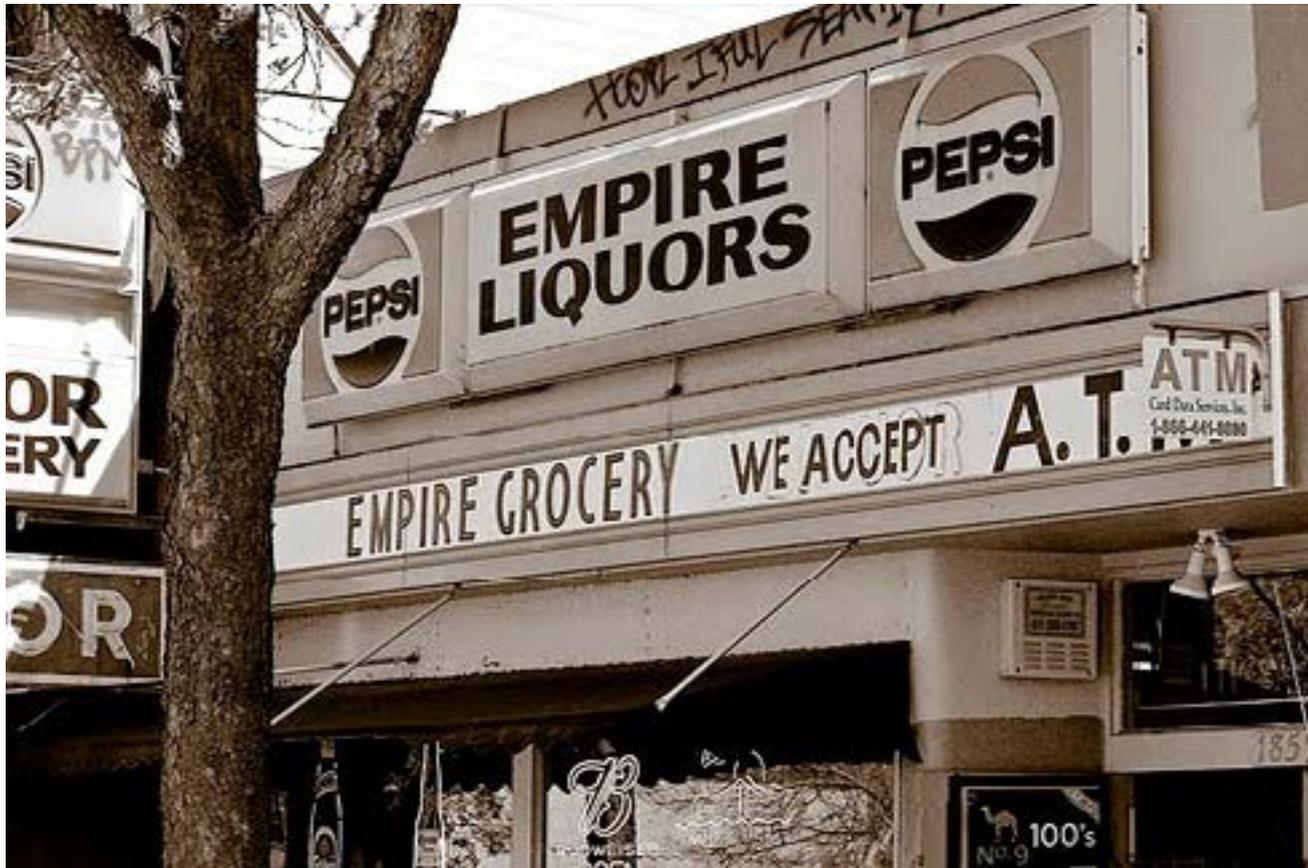
Billy and Soon Ja Du lived in the middle class enclave of Mission Hills, where the per capita income was twice that of Latasha Harlins’ South Central neighborhood. The average

family income of Koreans in Los Angeles in 1990 was \$46,307 while that of blacks was \$26,849. In 1990 unemployment for black males was just under 50% in Latasha Harlins neighborhood. It comes as no surprise that Billy Du refused to hire the locals who asked for work. South Central liquor stores echo the relationship which existed when plantation merchants sold booze to slaves.

Stores rip people off, that is their economic function. The ill-will this generates cannot be wished away, even though it is the corporations whose products are sold there who are the primary beneficiary of the retail arrangement. The corporate owners are on the golf course when store owners or employ-

County were killed in robberies.

Yet all this conflict and inequality shouldn't blind us to the growing commonality of the past twenty-five years in Los Angeles and across the United States. Consider the success of Ice Cube's *Death Certificate*, an album that was far more than an anti-Asian diatribe. Released in the year Latasha Harlins was shot with almost no airplay and a meager promotion budget, *Death Certificate* debuted on the album chart at number two. Its popularity was across the board--from inner city mom-and-pop stores to the mall-dominated, 1,000 store Musicland chain, where Ice Cube's album was the best seller during its first week of release. The problems of poverty and



EMPIRE LIQUOR MARKET, SOUTH CENTRAL LA

ees or customers get shot.

There was a series of boycotts of Korean-owned stores in many cities across the U.S. during the 1980s and 1990s. But the primary issue wasn't race, it was high prices combined with customer poverty,

During the period of the boycotts, customer poverty was getting worse. For example, in Los Angeles by the end of the 1970s many major employers which had provided good jobs for South Central residents – Ford, GM, Chrysler, Goodyear, Bethlehem, Firestone – had closed their local factories. 300,000 more jobs were eliminated in Los Angeles in 1991, a year in which eleven Korean merchants in Los Angeles

violence described by Ice Cube were spreading throughout society. In 1991, only one in three poor children lived in the inner city. It was the suburbs which had the fastest-growing poverty rate.

The history of Los Angeles in the past quarter century has been marked by a series of attempts to seek justice, build unity, or just survive. Sometimes organized, sometimes not, they come and they go, but viewed together they reveal an expanding quilt of great potential.

In between Latasha Harlin's killing and the LA rebellion, the Latasha Harlins Justice Committee launched a petition campaign to put a measure on the ballot to recall Joyce

Karlin. They had only a short time to gather the required 400,000 names. Amazingly, they got 200,000 signatures. Compton City Councilwoman Patricia Moore was active in the effort and, Brenda Stevenson writes: “Moore reported that she received between 50 and 100 calls each day concerning Karlin’s sentencing of Du. These calls, she made clear, did not come only from traditionally black and Latino communities, but from across the city, including the Westside, Hollywood, and the San Fernando Valley.”

During the 1992 LA rebellion, several thousand people were arrested—51% Latino, 36% black, 11% white, all poor. Most arrests weren’t for acts of violence, they were for taking food and diapers or for curfew violations.

In August 1996, Tupac and Snoop Dogg spoke at a Los Angeles press conference called to oppose the anti-affirmative action Proposition 209 and to denounce the three strikes law. Tupac, who had sold twelve million CDs in the first eight months of that year, talked of the political force that could be forged if his fans and Snoop’s fans could be brought together.

In 2006, over a million immigrants marched in Los Angeles for the right to live legally in the U.S. (in 2014, polls showed that 81 per cent of all California residents support the right of immigrants to live here regardless of immigration status).

Since 2008, tens of thousands of Los Angeles County residents of every color and nationality have struggled to stay in their homes when faced with foreclosure.

In 2012, echoing the Karlin recall effort of 1992, over two million people across the United States signed a petition demanding that George Zimmerman be arrested for the murder of Trayvon Martin. Nearly one hundred thousand of those signers were in Los Angeles.

Beginning early in this millennium and continuing today, Korean and Latino restaurant and market employees in LA have banded together to fight for better wages and working conditions. 85 per cent of Korean and Latino restaurant workers are undocumented.

Many links have been forged in Los Angeles over the past few decades but each is an isolated entity unto itself. There is no organized chain to bring them together so that common interests can come to the fore. Creating that chain is the next step. So many have eloquently talked it, now is finally the time we can begin to walk it. **CP**

LEE BALLINGER co-edits *Rock & Rap Confidential*. Free email subscriptions are available by writing rockrap@aol.com.

China’s Game of Shadows With the United States

Paper Dragon

BY PETER LEE

He will win who knows when to fight and when not to fight. There are roads which must not be followed, armies which must be not attacked. – Sun Tzu

For the United States military, the central issue is not the assertiveness of the People’s Liberation Army; it is its elusiveness.

The most nettlesome weapons of the People’s Republic of China are not its ASBMs—the “carrier killer” anti-ship ballistic missile; the aircraft carrier Liaoning; the J-20 fifth generation stealth fighter; or China’s nascent space and anti-satellite capabilities, its full-court press in cyberwarfare, or even its strategic nuclear arsenal, now submarine based as well as land based.

Instead, the U.S. fears and loathes China’s “salami slicer” and “cabbage leafer”—the incremental tactics just below military confrontation, employing civil government resources like maritime patrol boats and coast guard cutters, that the PRC uses to enforce its claims to sovereignty, implement its maritime regulations, shoulder its way into reefs, atolls, and islands in its maritime near beyond, evict other claimants—and thereby call into question the value of the U.S. military deterrent in Asia.

For the most part, the PRC eschews direct military confrontation with the United States, and for good reason. The U.S., with a \$600 billion annual defense budget (about four times that of the PRC’s), is the world’s paramount military power, not only in the quantity and quality of its armament, but also in its vast, bloody experience gained in a virtually non-stop series of military actions over the last thirty years. Within the U.S. military, China’s People’s Liberation Army (PLA) is regarded as a paper dragon, one that has not fought a war since a less than glorious encounter with Vietnam in 1979, has participated in no serious overseas deployments (it will send a combat battalion to participate in UN peacekeeping operations in South Sudan this year, a first for China), and is little more than an untested and suspect collection of officers, systems, equipment, and doctrine.

The People’s Republic of China has been, for the most part, extremely deferential concerning the prerogatives claimed by the U.S. military in Asia. After ugly encounters in 2001 and 2009, when the PRC tested the resolve of the incoming George W. Bush and Barack Obama administrations and thought seriously about trying to exclude U.S. military vessels from its Exclusive Economic Zone, the PRC has knuckled under and accepted the U.S. Navy’s right to sail back and

forth inside its EEZ, even when the U.S. ships are conducting surveillance of PLAN submarine movements. The only recent unpleasantness occurred this year when a PLAN vessel played “chicken of the sea” with the U.S.S. Cowpens when the US frigate got closer than the PRC liked in its observation of the sea trials of the aircraft carrier Liaoning.

When the PRC announced its Air Defense Identification Zone, or ADIZ, over the East China Sea, the US immedi-

sis that accurately reflected the PRC’s military and security priorities – mainly Taiwan and maritime energy flows. It also recorded the reorganization and muscling up of the PRC military to enhance its power projection capabilities – something the PRC has, indeed, been bragging about as a matter of national pride and dignity.

The PRC begged to differ, however. The PRC Ministry of Defense, a reliable source of indignant spittle against U.S. in



CHINESE MILITARY STATION, SOUTH CHINA SEA. PHOTO: AFP

ately flew two Guam-based B-52s into the zone unannounced in order to assert its privilege of unrestricted flight, and the PRC quietly acquiesced. Despite the ritual invocation of tensions between the US and PRC militaries, this month the PLA Navy will send four vessels to participate for the first time in RIMPAC, a large, US-hosted multi-national naval exercise in the West Pacific.

The PLA has maintained its aversion to direct confrontation with the United States, something that the PRC presumably will not be ready for until around 2049 – when completion of its program of “national rejuvenation” has been scheduled.

However, recently the PRC has signaled its military capabilities have evolved, not enough to challenge the apex position of the US military, but enough to challenge its relevance in Asia.

The most recent furor over China’s military posture added a new and important element to the “China threat” exercise. It was triggered by the release of the U. S. Department of Defense’s “Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China 2014.”

I found the report a sober and even-handed piece of analy-

sis that accurately reflected the PRC’s military and security priorities – mainly Taiwan and maritime energy flows. It also recorded the reorganization and muscling up of the PRC military to enhance its power projection capabilities – something the PRC has, indeed, been bragging about as a matter of national pride and dignity.

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The Chinese military is growing stronger, as the latest Pentagon report duly notes -- but only to safeguard peace and stability.

Guaranteeing peace and stability in East Asia is the traditional exclusive franchise of the United States, if self-assigned, and also underpins the “pivot to Asia,” the Obama administration’s strategy to leverage US military, soft power, and economic advantages into leadership of a coalition of Asian nations that will constrain China and establish Western liberal-democratic “rules of the road” as the norm for East Asia.

In contrast, the PRC has taken to signaling that the relatively minor challenges that afflict Asian security – the North Korean menace, piracy, and natural disasters – can and should be handled by Asians themselves, rather than deferring to the United States. Indeed, given the reality of an East Asia humming along on a shared economic track, the massive US position in Asia—140,000 service personnel and depen-

dents primarily in the Republic of Korea and Japan, including 28,000 soldiers in South Korea, a 10 vessel Carrier Strike Group at Yokosuka, the US Air Force's largest attack wing at Kaneda, and a clutch of Marine Corps facilities in Okinawa--looks somewhat anachronistic.

President Obama made the interesting decision to visit only pivot partners during his Asian tour of April 2014, and to deal primarily with pivot business. The PRC was consoled with visits from First Lady Michelle Obama and Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel. Hagel was handled rather roughly by the PRC. The Chinese Minister of Defense Chang Wanquan, availed himself of the opportunity presented by the joint press conference to declare that "China cannot be contained" a theme that was echoed by a series of statements in official and official media along the lines of "Asian security by and for Asians."

The PRC is not trying to defeat the US military; nor, does it appear that it is ready to take the incendiary move of even asking the US to leave East Asia; instead, the PRC is trying to neutralize the US Asian military apparatus in place, diminish its relevance and role, and perhaps, in the long term, make the US question the wisdom of maintaining its security footprint in Asia.

The PRC has made its strongest claim as regional hegemon in the waters of the South China Sea, cradled between Vietnam, the Philippines, and the Indonesian archipelago. China is by far the biggest bully on the block—Vietnamese and Philippine naval capabilities are negligible and the United States military, though tempted, has not yet essayed a return to its gigantic naval facilities at Subic Bay in the Philippines or Cam Ranh Bay in Vietnam. By contrast, the PRC has a cluster of naval and air force facilities on Hainan Island, including a base for its strategic submarine fleet, and has enhanced its coast guard and maritime patrol capabilities to police the local fisheries.

Much of the South China Sea is a shallow continental shelf and home to a welter of reefs and uninhabited islands, primarily clustered in two groups: the Paracels, which the PRC seized from (South) Vietnam in the 1970s and have under firm control; and the Spratly Islands, a dog's breakfast of islands toward the Philippine side of the South China Sea whose islands are claimed by everybody: the PRC, the Philippines, Vietnam, Brunei, Malaysia, even Taiwan.

In the South China Sea, the PRC is seeking to leverage its island possessions into acknowledgement by its neighbors of its dominant position, inching towards its goal using non-military measures, justifying its position with reference to UNCLOS – the UN Convention on Law of the Sea—and its concept of the Exclusive Economic Zone, or EEZ, while pointedly ignoring the U.S.

In May 2014, in a carefully planned foray, the PRC sent its deep water semi-submersible drilling platform, a lumbering, billion-dollar symbol of national pride (and instrument

of regional intimidation in matters of disputed hydrocarbon resources) called the HYSY 981, into the South China Sea for some exploratory drilling. To the outrage of Vietnam, the rig set up operations close to the Paracel Islands, controlled by the PRC, and inside what Vietnam considers to be its exclusive EEZ. The rig was accompanied by a flotilla of dozens of vessels—none of them PLA Navy—and has spent the last few weeks swatting aside, ramming, watercannoning, and in one case swamping the Vietnamese vessels tasked with indignantly harassing the intruders.

Most Western observers, mesmerized by the spectacle of plucky Vietnam fighting back against the PRC, concluded that the PRC was engaged in some blind, self-defeating goonery. However, given the closeness of the Paracels, the PRC has a decent case that an eventual delineation of the two countries' EEZs would put the drilling site in the PRC zone, and it appeared that the PRC had found a plausible way to assert its South China Sea claims through economic combat without running up against the "freedom of navigation" red line. The United States failed to come up with a prompt riposte and ASEAN declined to formally condemn the PRC, reinforcing the perception that the PRC had successfully defied the United States, humiliated one of the states that the pivot was designed to succor, and called into question the validity and efficacy of the US military deterrent.

Vietnam reached out to the Philippines and Japan and got their assistance in cranking the global outrage machine against the Chinese bully. PRC pushback has been ferocious, feeding the meme that the HYSY 981 stunt is a blunder that is destroying China's regional and global standing and has driven Vietnam and the Philippines into the welcoming arms of the pivot.

However, the true significance of all this heat and heartburn appears to be that the PRC took into account the anticipated unpopularity of its move and dismissed it. In fact, Beijing perhaps even welcomed the outrage as an opportunity to demonstrate Chinese resolve and show that foreign disapproval – and the US pivot, which is built on the idea that PRC assertiveness will lead to a virtuous cycle of reinforcement of the anti-China alliance--could not deter the PRC from advancing its core interests in the South China Sea.

The PRC appears to be expanding its footprint on other islands in the South China Sea in preparation for adoption of the similar disputed sovereignty/EEZ formula for its acrid dispute with the Philippines over islands, EEZs, and energy. The PRC is building up one speck in the Spratly Islands—the Johnson South Reef—apparently so it can build an airstrip, either for strategic purposes or in order to declare that the island can sustain human habitation and economic life and thereby claim an EEZ.

Recently, Hong Kong media reported on another possible PRC island building mega-project in the South China Sea – Fiery Cross Shoal—that might cost U.S. \$5 billion. If con-

structed, this boondoggle would easily dwarf the previous faux-island champion, Japan's Okotorishima Island, which parlayed a \$600 million investment on two eroding rocks no larger than a hotel room into tens of thousands of square miles of newly-minted EEZ.

As the PRC proceeds, its formula for its dealings with Vietnam and the Philippines appears to be no overt military component – and no pretext for U.S. involvement in the South China Sea. The United States will not take this lying down, if only for reasons of national pride – and it will not be terribly surprising if Vietnam welcomes the US back to Cam Ranh Bay--but for the time being Washington seems bereft of direct, effective countermeasures beyond the tongue-clucking disapproval that China seems determined to disregard.

So far, the PRC has also successfully threaded the needle in the East China Sea, where its regional antagonist, Japan, is much more powerful than China's overmatched South China Sea rivals by virtue of its economic strength, its modern and sizable military, the US military alliance, and the fact that in this case the contested islands – the Senkakus – are held by Japan, not the PRC, and covered by the U.S.-Japan security treaty.

In the East China Sea, the PRC goals are considerably more modest and difficult to attain than its ambitions in the South China Sea. In the ECS, the PRC's goal is not territorial aggrandizement; it is to foster divisions between two allies, Japan and the United States, that are for once, after decades of fits and starts, both very interested in working together to constrain China.

The stakes are especially high in the East China Sea because the United States has been encouraging Japan to adopt a doctrine of "collective self defense" or CSD and in return considering closer support of Japan in its confrontations with the PRC.

CSD appears to be part of the U.S. pivot strategy to maintain military superiority in Asia even as the various countries muscle up, by integrating Japanese forces in US battle plans. "Collective Self Defense" would permit Japanese forces to come to the assistance of an ally under attack. The overt justification is typified by rather unlikely scenarios like the US military needing Japanese help to beat back a North Korean missile attack; underneath it all appears to be the desire to have Japanese forces blasting away together with their US partners in the case of a scrape with the PRC.

Despite widespread dislike of the PRC, Japanese voters have been understandably skeptical of CSD and wary of the possibility that it will ensnare Japan to undesirable foreign military adventures.

For its part, the Abe administration has apparently tried to bargain with the United States, offering to push through CSD (by unilateral constitutional reinterpretation by the Cabinet) in return for US acceptance of Japan's "gray zone crisis" security formulation.

The "gray zone crisis" posits that the PRC offers unacceptable security threats to Japan that are delivered in a non-military wrapper, or obscured by military maneuvers deemed legal in international practice. Examples given are the possibility that the PRC will send military personnel disguised as fishermen to try to seize the Senkakus; or that PLAN submarines will take advantage of their navigation rights to make unacceptably close approaches to Japan.

The Abe administration wants the right to assume a confrontational posture – seize the "fishing boat", force the submarine to surface – with the assurance that, if things get ugly, Japan can invoke the military support of the United States in this "gray area" the same as Japan can for a conventional attack.

This divergence of views over the grey zone crisis reveals a fissure in the alliance.

The United States government, if not the U.S. public at large, is unhappily aware that U.S. and Japanese interests do not perfectly coincide. Abe is a Japanese nationalist, dismissive of U.S. claims to regional leadership based upon victory over Japan in World War II, and determined to exploit US military backing and the pivot to Asia in order to advance independent strategic goals. Add to that the fact that Abe's ideological and emotional American soul mate is Dick Cheney, not Barack Obama.

And also add the concern that Japan might decide to overcome the PRC's refusal to oblige with a military incident with a provocation or misrepresentation in the obscure reaches of the East China Sea – such as a recent intrusion by Japanese surveillance aircraft into a no-fly zone announced by the PRC on the occasion of joint PRC-Russian military exercises – and one has a situation in which the current U.S. government is apparently not interested in signing on the "gray zone" doctrine and writing a blank check for U.S. backing of Japanese military adventures.

As Reuters reported on a U.S.-Japanese defense confab in March:

 Tokyo wants Washington to join in drafting scenarios for how the two allies would respond in specific cases, he said.

 But Washington is worried about provoking China by being too specific, say Japanese officials and experts. 'The United States is certainly ambivalent about this because they think it would drag them into a confrontation and possibly a conflict with China,' said Narushige Michishita, who was a national security adviser to the government of Junichiro Koizumi from 2004-2006.

The PRC has done its best to exacerbate the contradictions between the US and Japan by ceaselessly harping on the Senkakus.

On the surface, the conflict over the Senkakus is ridiculous. The islands are immediately offshore of Taiwan and by right of history, geographic propinquity, and seabed conformation, should belong to Taiwan. Japan first gained control of them only in 1895, when it began its imperial adventures in Asia at China's expense. Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger recognized this fact and agonized over whether or not to hand the Senkakus over to Japan when the U.S. returned administrative control of the Okinawa Prefecture (in which the islands were situated) to Tokyo in 1973. To assuage their consciences for jobbing reliable anti-Communist ally Taiwan out of these

nationalism, brinkmanship, and independent security policy and their undesirable consequences alive for the United States.

Continuing PRC provocations over the Senkakus – an issue over which the US and Japan have sharp if hidden differences – serve to highlight the fact that the PRC still welcomes the United States in the region, but as a restraint against Japan, not China.

Indeed, a case can be made that the most destabilizing development in Asia in the last four years has not been “rising China”; it has been the determination of Abe's conservative



CHINESE NAVY WAR GAMES. PHOTO: AFP

islands, Nixon and Kissinger declared that the US was not acknowledging Japanese sovereignty over the Senkakus, and extracted an assurance from Japan that sovereignty would be worked out between China and Japan.

Instead, Japan glommed on to the islands and asserted Japanese sovereignty. Then, in 2012, the Japanese government repudiated the Nixon/Kissinger assurance and, instead of negotiating the sovereignty of the islands, nationalized three of them through purchase from their private Japanese owner.

This apparently remains a sore spot for the United States. Although it has declared that the United States will help Japan in case the Senkakus are attacked, it has never acknowledged Japanese sovereignty over the islands.

One reason that the PRC harps on the Senkaku Islands and repeatedly sends its maritime patrol vessels (but not naval vessels) into the 12 nautical mile territorial waters surrounding the Senkakus is, I believe, to keep the issues of Japanese

and nationalistic government to claim an active role for Japan – with the expectation of U.S. backing – in regional security affairs.

If the PRC has made significant gains in neutralizing the factor of the US in the South China Sea, and partially wedging the U.S.-Japan military alliance, it's a different story on the most important island issue, Taiwan.

The PRC may fancy itself the sober and responsible guarantor of peace and security in Asia, but has not yet found a way to reconcile that role with insisting on its right to go bugnuts crazy in order to deter Taiwan from considering de jure independence.

On Taiwan, the PRC has put itself in a military-response cul de sac. It has invested a great deal of money and prestige into preserving the credibility of its military deterrent against Taiwan independence.

In the early days of U.S.-PRC rapprochement, it was

thought that the issue of Taiwan – at that time ruled by the oppressive remnants of Chiang Kai-shek’s Kuomintang or KMT – would somehow fade into insignificance.

Instead, Taiwan democratized and many Taiwanese indigenes (as opposed to those with ancestral roots to the mainland and the KMT) expressed a desire for de jure independence through the main opposition party, the Democratic People’s Party or DPP.

The US government expressed an active interest in augmenting Taiwan’s military defenses and ensuring that the PRC could not invade democratic Taiwan. The PRC, for its part, undertook a sizable military buildup across the straits from Taiwan in order to maintain the credibility of its deterrent.

The United States has stuck with its One China policy for the most part (though Donald Rumsfeld’s minions allegedly egged on the DPP’s Chen Shuibian – the president of the ROC from 2000 to 2008 –to declare independence); even as US-PRC relations turned increasingly confrontational during the Obama years, the US policy apparatus has consistently discouraged talk of independence referendums or independence-leaning constitutional revision on Taiwan.

This relatively stable situation may be in the process of breaking down. The current mainland-friendly KMT administration is suffering from dismal approval ratings thanks to economic and corruption problems, and distaste over its untransparent trade and services negotiations with the PRC. The emboldened opposition, the pro-independence DPP, and a burgeoning student movement, the “Sunflower” movement, have elevated criticism of the conciliatory attitude of the KMT toward the mainland to a matter of existential urgency. Recently, with the endorsement of the DPP, “Sunflower” students occupied the ROC parliament to demand changes to the review and ratification procedure for a Taiwan-mainland service pact.

There is a good possibility that the DPP candidate will win the presidential election of 2016 and, if it doesn’t, the DPP and the student movement will engage in mass resistance to a new KMT government that will inevitably excite American recollections of Maidan Square in Kyiv. On the list of undesirable outcomes for the PRC that might arise from the fall of the KMT, either by electoral defeat or through a people’s power movement, from least worst to worst are Taiwanese ceding its Senkaku claims to Japan, announcement of plans for an independence referendum, or some kind of helter-skelter independence declaration in an atmosphere of national crisis, all leavened by exhortations for the world to help protect Taiwanese freedom from PRC oppression.

This state of affairs will be extremely unwelcome to the PRC – but manageable if the U.S. refrains from endorsing the anti-mainland movement and backs the forces calling for restraint and muddling through (a majority of Taiwanese are, according to the polls, still not interested in rocking the boat).

However, the prospect of Taiwan turning into another Ukraine—the chance to wrench Taiwan out of the PRC’s economic orbit and commit it irrevocably to Japan and the United States—may finally be too strong to resist, especially for presumptive US president Hillary Clinton, who staked her State Department Asia policy on the idea that the PRC could be successfully and productively confronted. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, part of a nationalist tradition which celebrates Japan’s benign occupation of Taiwan from 1895 to 1945—and cherishes the close ties between the Taiwanese opposition and Shintaro Ishihara and other ultranationalists—might also find chaos in Taiwan an irresistible invitation to meddle.

In this case, the PRC will be faced with the undesirable alternatives of letting Taiwan go, thereby encouraging defiance by its large array of internal and external adversaries – including Hong Kong, where local distaste for Beijing’s pseudo-democratic indirect rule is burgeoning – or making good on its promise to forestall Taiwanese independence by military means if necessary.

The PRC has the means to throw the kitchen sink at Taiwan and overwhelm its combined ROC/US air defenses – hundreds of short range ballistic missiles, around four hundred jet fighters--and field an amphibious assault capability. But an all-out military effort against Taiwan would be political, economic, and diplomatic suicide and, unless the US shows extraordinary forbearance (i.e. throws Taiwan under the bus), the PRC will find itself in the exact position it has labored to avoid for the last four decades – in direct confrontation with the US military.

Sun-tzu would probably have approved of PRC stratagems in the South and East China Seas:

“Thus the highest form of generalship is to balk the enemy’s plans [i.e. the careful counterattack against the pivot in the South China Sea]; the next best is to prevent the junction of the enemy’s forces [wedging Japan and the United States in the East China Sea]...”

But he detested frontal attacks on fortified positions [Taiwan]:

“... the worst policy of all is to besiege walled cities.”

It remains to see how the PRC can respond to a major Taiwan crisis – and if the U.S. decides to precipitate one, mindful that its seventy year reign as Asia’s hegemon is slowly drawing to an end. If the PLA can’t dodge the US military in the Taiwan Strait, then all the patience, cleverness, and boldness it has showed in the South China and East China Seas will not be enough to save it. **CP**

PETER LEE edits China Matters.

The Battle Over Pat Tillman

A Ten Year Retrospective

BY DAVID HOELSCHER

Whoso would be a man, must be a nonconformist.
– Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Self-Reliance,” 1841

As surprising as it may sound, April 22 marked the ten year anniversary of the death of Pat Tillman. For readers too young to remember, Tillman was a professional football player who, in the wake of the 9/11 attacks, walked away from the game in order to join the United States Army. His death by so-called friendly fire in eastern Afghanistan was one of the major news stories of 2004.

Since then, estimations of Tillman have tended to be of three general types. The most commonly-held by far sees him as an unquestioning patriot whose sacrifices (his football career, his life) constituted, or resulted from, acts of uncomplicated heroism. This view, as filmmaker Amir Bar-Lev (director, *The Tillman Story*, 2010) says, is “one-dimensional, simplistic,” and lacking in humanity. It is, as he observes, a kind of “cartoon.” It was a cartoon giddily conceived by the administration of George W. Bush, cynically produced by animators from U.S. Army brass, and dutifully delivered to American living rooms via compliant corporate mass media.

A second general view, espoused by a relative but forceful few, is fiercely critical of Tillman. A recent exemplar is author David Swanson. After philosopher Peter Boghossian suggested, in a recent book, that Tillman was an example of a “very moral” person, Swanson begged to differ. Writing in the January/February 2014 issue of *The Humanist* magazine, Swanson averred that Tillman “joined in the senseless slaughter of the people of Afghanistan” and that, in admiring the fallen soldier, Boghossian had cast aside critical thought in favor of abiding by “his faith in nationalism.”

Critical assessments of that sort have appeared here and there over the years, some within days of Tillman’s death. For instance, two days after Tillman was killed, in an online piece for *CounterPunch*, Kurt Nimmo wrote that the “brainwashed” former football star “viewed life precisely the same way millions of Americans do, that is to say he uncritically bought into Bush’s lies and warmongering.” On the same website the next day, Mickey Z. opined that, to him, soldiers like Tillman “seem like heavily-conditioned American males...the spawn of decades of corporate conditioning and State-sponsored patriotism.” He went on: “The world doesn’t need any more ‘heroes’ like Pat Tillman,” who, although possessed of “noble aspirations,” essentially died in defense of corporate profit. Writing in his school newspaper, *The Daily Collegian* (28 April 2004), University of Massachusetts graduate student Rene Gonzalez penned a column titled “Pat Tillman Is Not

a Hero: He Got What Was Coming to Him.” For Gonzalez—who later apologized after his comments set off a brief media firestorm, – Tillman was a “pendejo” driven by “nationalist-patriotic fantasies forged during years of exposure to Clint Eastwood and Rambo movies.” A few days later, editorial cartoonist Ted Rall offered a similar assessment, portraying Tillman as a dumb, bloodthirsty jock. Over time, though, Rall’s stance softened somewhat. In a September 2009 essay, he called Tillman’s decision to join the Army merely “idiotic” and “reprehensible.”

Those general viewpoints are, for the most part, wildly off the mark. They are about as far from reflecting reality as is an absurd suggestion made by Jon Krakauer in the closing pages of his Tillman biography, badly titled *Where Men Win Glory*. Therein, Krakauer entertains the possibility that Tillman, whose major biographical markers include such pedestrian life choices as majoring in marketing while in college, devoting a large chunk of his life to football, and (under unusual circumstances to be sure) joining the military during a time of rampant patriotic fervor, was perhaps something of a Nietzschean *ubermensch*.

All of which brings us to general view number three. This is the conception that sportswriter Dave Zirin, in his 2010 interview of Amir Bar-Lev, aptly summarizes as the “very rounded view” showing Tillman “as three-dimensional human being.” When we look at Tillman closely, we find an imperfect, unusually complex young man who was, as Bar-Lev says, “a lot more likable” and “a lot more admirable” than most people know. The trouble is that the relevant information about Tillman’s real character and personality is widely scattered—in books written by his mother, Mary Tillman, and his widow, Marie Tillman; in Krakauer’s biography; in the Amir-Lev documentary; in various magazine and newspaper articles. Consequently, outside of Tillman’s family and friends, few people are familiar with more than a small fraction of it. The rest of this article is an effort, which will no doubt prove incomplete, to present the essential facts all in one place. (Except where otherwise noted, the following portrait is based on the books *Where Men Win Glory: The Odyssey of Pat Tillman* by Jon Krakauer, *Boots on the Ground by Dusk: My Tribute to Pat Tillman* by Mary Tillman, and *The Letter: My Journey through Love, Loss, and Life* by Marie Tillman.)

Patrick Daniel Tillman was born in Fremont, California, on November 6, 1976. The oldest of three brothers, he grew up in an upper-middle class household in New Almaden, in suburban San Jose, California. His father, Patrick, was a lawyer, his mother, Mary, a schoolteacher. Tillman was awarded a football scholarship by Arizona State University (ASU), where, as a senior (in 1997), he was Pacific 10 Division Defensive Player of the Year and second-team All-American. Moving on to the National Football League, he played safety for four years for the Arizona Cardinals. In May 2002, Pat

married his high school sweetheart, Marie Ugenti. In June, he and his brother Kevin enlisted in the Army.

A couple of months later, the Tillman brothers reported for basic training. In 2003, after completing a short tour of duty in Iraq, Pat and Kevin completed Army Ranger School. In April 2004 they were sent to Afghanistan. Exactly two weeks after their arrival, in a misconceived and botched mission near the Pakistan border, Pat was killed in a hail of gunfire recklessly directed at him by soldiers from his own platoon. He was 27 years old.

Although within hours of Tillman's death Army officers knew it was a fratricide, they told his family and the press that he had died heroically in a battle with the Taliban. In violation of Army regulations, his uniform, body armor, and journal were burned prior to his autopsy, which, as it happens, was not performed according to standard procedure. More than a month passed before the Army notified the Tillmans that Pat had actually been killed by fellow soldiers. Neither the painstaking and undaunted longtime efforts of Mary Tillman, nor the occurrence of several governmental investigations, has compelled the Army to reveal the full truth about the circumstances of Pat's death or the facts about the military cover up.

According to Marie Tillman, her husband's outward personality was characterized by a "tough exterior" and "cocky demeanor and bravado" that concealed "his inner self." In fact, he was an "incredibly sensitive" person somewhat preoccupied with trying to be a good person. Throughout his life Tillman had "a very close, jealousy-free relationship" with both his brothers. Although his parents divorced at some point prior to Tillman's marriage, one gets a sense from the literature that Pat had a close bond with both mother and father. He was gregarious and outgoing, in the habit of saying hello to all who crossed his path during his exercise runs and of prompting people to engage in serious discussions and debates about all manner of weighty topics. Tillman's father had emphasized to his sons the importance of being honest, a value that, according to Mary, Pat earnestly embraced.

Tillman was an independent thinker with a tendency to question and rebel against authority, traits his parents had encouraged. Krakauer writes of Tillman's childhood "When the boys had to be indoors, they engaged in clamorous discussions about current events, history, and politics with their parents and with each other. Almost no subject was off limits." He goes on: "Encouraged to think critically and be skeptical of conventional wisdom, Pat learned to trust in himself and be unafraid to buck the herd." According to Marie "he questioned everything." Writing of their days in high school, she relates that Tillman "was constantly testing boundaries, getting into trouble for usually harmless stuff." She "admired the way he pushed limits." Much later, frustrated with the often ridiculous expectations placed on enlisted men in the Army, Tillman told Marie "I'm too old for this shit ... I can drop to the ground and give them fifty push-ups, but I

don't want to, because it's stupid." For Tillman, the gravity of what happened on 9/11 put the absurdity of much of military culture into stark relief. Such considerations were, however, of no concern to the Army. Journalist Mick Brown reports that Tillman claimed he was required to undergo psychological evaluations more often than were other soldiers in his unit. Brown writes that, according to Mary Tillman, who has seen some of the reports, they say among other things that Pat "didn't respect authority" (*The Telegraph* online, 07 Oct 2010).

It's a fair guess, I think, that a large part of Tillman's trouble with authority stemmed from an uncommon understanding on his part that reflexive conformity is contrary to integrity and personal growth. During Tillman's memorial service, his brother-in-law, Alex Garwood, told the gathering that Tillman "was on a constant quest to improve himself." He quoted Tillman's mother as saying that Pat "was deliberate about making himself a better person." In her memoir, Marie writes in similar terms about Tillman's decision to enlist in the Army. She, Pat, and Kevin "were joined in a higher purpose, setting forward on an adventure" they realized would be challenging, "but that would ultimately nourish our lives and help us grow." Not all of Tillman's self-improvement efforts were so momentous, however. Marie tells an anecdote about the period when she, Pat, and Kevin lived together in Washington state. Although they never managed to do it, they had sometimes discussed a plan to start a "Words of the Week" event, where each week, they'd select a few words from the dictionary and endeavor to incorporate them into their vocabulary.

That last sentence hints at one of Tillman's most impressive qualities, namely his vast intellectual curiosity. Krakauer reports that Tillman was "a compulsive reader who never went anywhere without a book" and whose intellectual curiosity "was boundless." Because it tells us so much worth knowing about Tillman, the following paragraph from Krakauer is quoted in full:

Because he loved engaging in informed debate, Pat made an effort to study history, economic theory, and world events from a variety of perspectives. Toward that end he read the Bible, the Book of Mormon, the Quran, and the works of writers ranging from Adolph Hitler to Henry David Thoreau. Although Tillman held strong opinions on many subjects, he was bracingly open-minded and quick to admit he was wrong when confronted with facts and a persuasive argument.

Mary mentions that Tillman had "an interest in history, politics, and economics and a love of arguing over all three." Marie notes that he actively sought out discussions about both religion and politics, and that he collected books of philosophy, history, and poetry. He "spent a lot of time reading about Winston Churchill [of whom he had a framed picture], Abraham Lincoln" and other historical figures. He read *The Communist Manifesto*. He was a regular reader of

The Economist and *The Wall Street Journal* (Robert Collier, *San Francisco Chronicle* online, 25 Sept. 2005; Josh Weinfuss, ESPN.com, 22 April 2004). He read Noam Chomsky, whom, Krakauer writes, Tillman admired both for his “intellectual courage and his straightforward, unembellished turns of phrase.” During their time in Washington state, Pat, Kevin, and Marie formed their own little book discussion group. Brown writes that—again according to Mary Tillman—Pat “grew frustrated at the lack of intellectual stimulation” offered up by military life. Characteristically, he didn’t take that frustration lying down. Journalist Robert Collier reports that [apparently while in Iraq] Tillman “created a makeshift base library of classic novels so his platoon mates would have literature to read in their down time.”

In an almost completely overlooked part of his life, Tillman’s interest in history grew to the point where, during his pro football days, he worked on a master’s degree in history at ASU. Only a handful of sources have ever mentioned this, and none of them provide any details. I wasn’t able to get much information from ASU, but the school’s Media Relations office confirmed this much: “We can share that Pat Tillman was a part-time graduate student in History who was enrolled at Arizona State University in Spring 1998, Summer 2001 and Spring 2002” (email from Judy Crawford, 29 May 2014).

Tillman’s favorite piece of writing seems to have been Ralph Waldo Emerson’s essay “Self-Reliance.” He brought a collection of Emerson’s writings with him to Iraq, and, after returning home to Marie, he “read and reread its contents” with great enthusiasm. “‘Self-Reliance’ touched my soul,” Tillman wrote. He thought it “truly brilliant.” As Krakauer notes, the essay includes these lines:

Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind. ... What I must do is all that concerns me, not what the people think. This rule, equally arduous in actual and in intellectual life, may serve for the whole distinction between greatness and meanness. ... It is easy in the world to live after the world’s opinion; it is easy in solitude to live after our own; but the great man is he who in the midst of the crowd keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude.

In March 2003, with the U.S. invasion of Iraq imminent, Tillman wrote in his journal that “My honor will not allow me to create a life of beauty and peace but sends me off to order and conformity. My life becomes everything I’m not.” He asks himself: “Where is my passion directed?” He answers: “Best I can tell, it’s to those who could[n’t] care less: the general masses. I follow some philosophy I barely understand. ... My direction is selfish, my *telos* destructive.”

As the foregoing passage suggests, Tillman was an unusually introspective person. Krakauer notes that, at age 16, Tillman “ruminated on the downside of his empathetic

nature.” In the wake of 9/11, when he was considering whether he ought to give up football and enlist in the Army, Tillman wrote of his dissatisfaction with the current course of his life, reflecting that “I’ve come to appreciate just how shallow and insignificant my role is.” In a journal entry shortly after entering the military, Tillman wondered whether people would judge him to be of good character and whether he could succeed in becoming the sort of man he hoped to be. In a letter to Marie, he wrote from Iraq “I think I may actually be a bad person for putting you through this” (i.e. long periods of separation). He continued: “It’s funny because at the time I felt that any absence would be tolerable due to the ‘cause’ or whatever concept I deluded myself into believing I was standing for. I’m a fool. How I managed to find a way out of our perfect existence is incredible.”

That excerpt serves as a good example of how Tillman’s introspectiveness was often thoroughly mixed together with an uncommonly high level of conscientiousness. A few days after the 9/11 attacks, in an interview with NFL Films, He said of football “Goddamn, it is unimportant” considered in the light of recent events. “I feel guilty even having the damn interview.” After relating that many of his relatives had fought in wars past, Tillman remarked “I really haven’t done a damn thing.” Marie writes that “the need to protect and defend was physical to him. Chivalry was embedded in his DNA.” In May 2002, having made up his mind that he would join the Army, Tillman turned down a \$3.6 million offer to continue playing for the Arizona Cardinals.

That wasn’t the first time Tillman declined, for reasons of conscience, an exceptionally attractive deal, and it wouldn’t be the last. In April 2001, after he’d completed his third season with the Cardinals, Tillman was offered a five-year, \$9.6 million contract from the St. Louis Rams. To the utter bafflement of most observers, he renewed with the Cardinals in a one-year deal for the (fourth-year) league minimum of \$512,000. His reasons were simple: he was comfortable with the Cardinals, and, because they had drafted him and put their confidence in him, he felt a sense of loyalty to his coaches. In December 2003, halfway through his three-year contract with the Army, Tillman’s agent informed him that, because Tillman had served in a war zone, and because the NFL, where several teams were clamoring for Tillman’s services, had close ties with the Army, certain seldom-used Army regulations could be exploited in order to secure Tillman an early, honorable discharge. Krakauer believes that, given Tillman’s celebrity, if he had gone along with the plan “he stood an excellent chance” of succeeding. However, Tillman rejected the idea, saying it would be wrong not to fulfill his commitment. Moreover, as Mary points out, accepting the offer would have meant deserting Kevin, an inconceivable move on Pat’s part.

Tillman’s conscientiousness was evident in other ways. Both before and after he joined the Army, he often agonized

over the emotional effects his enlistment was having or would have on his family members. Because he didn't want to aid the Bush administration in using him as a propaganda tool, he refused to grant any interviews about either his decision to enlist or his experience in the military, and he wrote a statement expressing his desire to have a civilian funeral in the event of his death. While in Iraq, he conspicuously exhibited a sincere concern for the welfare of Iraqi civilians.

And he was against the war in Iraq, which, like the rest of his immediate family, he thought both illegal and unjust. One night prior to departing for Iraq, Pat told Marie that, although he would do his job "I don't think our role there is virtuous at all." Krakauer quotes from a journal entry Tillman made in Saudi Arabia, a few days prior to the invasion of Iraq: "I hope [this war is about] more than oil, money, & powe...I doubt that it is." He went on "If anything were to happen to Kevin I would never forgive myself. If anything happens to Kevin, and my fears of our intent in this country prove true, I will never forgive this world." One night while watching bombs rain down on the Iraqi city of Nasiriyah, Tillman said to platoon mate Russell Baer "this war is just so fucking illegal" (Bar-Lev, *The Tillman Story*).

It is conceivable that, had he lived, Tillman might have taken on a significant role in, perhaps even turned his focus toward, some kind of social justice advocacy. A rarity among professional athletes of his day, especially within the heteronormative, hyper-masculinist world of pro football, Tillman was a staunch defender of gay rights. During his pro football days he knew he was overpaid relative to many other workers and it bothered him. That unease, Marie explains, was part of what compelled Tillman to embrace a relatively modest lifestyle. He referred to the late peace activist Rachel Corrie as "my hero." He wanted the country to take action to solve the problems of illiteracy among poor children and of poverty in general. Tillman not only read books by Noam Chomsky, he was eager to meet the great social justice advocate and anti-imperialist and he took some preliminary steps toward bringing about such a meeting (which never occurred because of Tillman's death).

On a related note, were Tillman alive today, with another decade's worth of reading and thinking behind him, it would be interesting to hear his reactions to reflections like (1) "I dislike almost everything about football – the senseless violence, the fans reveling in that violence, the pathological glorification of competition, the sexual objectification of female cheerleaders and dancers, the obscene amounts of money spent on the spectacle" (professor Robert Jensen) and (2) perhaps Tillman's considerable disgust with the less than gung-ho attitudes of many of his fellow soldiers, especially during his basic and advanced infantry training programs, was, to a good extent anyway, the product of a classist mindset on his part. Tillman had enjoyed a mostly pleasant and rather privileged life, and his choice to join the

Army was made within a context of his having nearly complete freedom to do anything he wanted. That would have been true for few of Tillman's fellow trainees, and indeed it is doubtless the case that, for socioeconomic reasons, some of them had had little choice but to join the Army. I like to think that, relative to his younger self, an older, wiser Pat Tillman would have had a somewhat altered outlook on such matters.

Whatever views Tillman would have done well to rethink, his assessment of religion is not among them. Inconveniently for the devout God-invokers of the Bush administration, the man they wanted to make into a poster boy for American militarism was an atheist. For most people who know this, the information comes by way of comments made by Pat's youngest brother, Richard, at Tillman's memorial service. "[M]ake no mistake," Richard told the assembled mourners, "he'd want me to say this, he's not with God; he's fucking dead. He's not religious, so thanks for your thoughts, but he's fucking dead."

It's worth going beyond those remarks, both because Tillman's non-belief was an important aspect of who he was, and because his secularity was the source of his ethics. Stan Goff, retired Army Special Forces veteran, notes that Tillman's skepticism appeared early (*Truthdig*, 28 July 2006). Mary Tillman, he writes, showed him part of Pat's journal, written when he was 16 years old.

It was Pat's reflection on why he had decided, once and for all, that he didn't need organized religion. The entry was motivated by Pat's grief at the death of an old family cat. Pat wasn't comfortable with the idea that one could love another creature that was being excluded from the bargain in the afterlife. He and his brothers grew up between a river and the mountains, where they roamed countless miles and delighted in the ceaseless interplay of geography, climate, flora and fauna. ... Pat speculated about this singular universality, and made up his mind that one didn't need some anti-material monarchy buzzing with angels to accommodate himself to mortality.

Although Pat and Marie had a large wedding, it was a secular affair in which the nuptials were conducted by a judge. After joining the Army, Tillman signed a military document indicating that religious officials were to have no role in any memorial services that might be conducted for him. "I've never feared death per se," Tillman wrote while serving in Iraq "or really given a shit what happens 'after.' I'll cross that bridge when I come to it...I do not fear what may await me, though I'm equally confident that nothing awaits."

Although Krakauer condescendingly suggests that Tillman was morally admirable *despite* his non-belief ("Pat was agnostic, perhaps even an atheist, but the Tillman family creed nevertheless imparted to him an overarching sense of values...") Pat himself counters that insult in words that appear near the end of Krakauer's own book. While he was in

Iraq, Tillman wrote in his journal that he desired “to do good, influence lives, show truth and right” and that he thought it important to yearn for “a general goodness free of religious pretensions.” He continued: “My concerns have to do with the ‘now’ and becoming the man I envision...I think I understand that religious faith which makes the holy brave and strong; my strength is just somewhere else – it’s in myself.”

Concerning Tillman’s atheism two final observations are in order. The first involves clarifying an obscurity concerning Bryan O’Neal, Tillman’s platoon mate in Afghanistan. O’Neal, who was under Tillman’s command, was within a few feet of Tillman when the latter was killed. In his interview for *The Tillman Story*, O’Neal, a Mormon, relates that when he and Tillman were being shot at, he (O’Neal) began to pray out loud asking God to save them. O’Neal then says:

And I remember Pat saying, “O’Neal, quit praying. God is not the one to help you now. This is reality; this is what we need to focus on. I don’t want you to go into some la-la land, not pay attention and then get killed.” I was actually grateful for him to say that. I was really trying to put my focus somewhere else and not keep it here. Pat, he saved my life.

Probably because O’Neal said that Tillman saved his life, rather than Tillman’s atheism saved his life, and because O’Neal’s next words return to the violence that occurred in the seconds leading up to the fratricide, judging by online discussions of Bar-Lev’s film almost nobody noticed the fascinating implication of O’Neal’s statements. From what I can see, the only person to have spelled it out is Bar-Lev himself, who told *Filmmaker Magazine* that “in fact what he [i.e. Tillman] did was by being an agnostic leaning toward atheist he saved Bryan O’Neal’s life.” O’Neal’s claim, certainly interesting given the certitude with which so many people say there are no atheists in foxholes, can actually be stated more directly: Tillman’s atheism saved O’Neal’s life.

The second observation is actually a short argument, namely, that any future history of secularism that covers the early 2000s should include a discussion of the Tillmans. In the months after Tillman’s death, his grieving family members were forced to deal with anti-atheist insults and many instances of religion-based insensitivity on the part of Army

personnel and others. But the Tillmans always pushed back, insisting that their non-belief be respected. We should be mindful that this period predated the explosion onto the scene of the New Atheist movement. Today, atheists may still be a widely despised minority, but in 2004 it was a great deal harder to stand up for one’s non-belief than it is today.

A three-dimensional picture of Tillman without a long discussion of his flaws will doubtless strike some as incomplete, perhaps even hagiographic. But my main purpose here has been to show the superiority of the three-dimensional view (over the other two) in a way that is properly sensitive to the poignancy of the (anniversary) moment. Therefore,

beyond the small amount of criticism offered earlier, it will be enough, I think, for us to take a brief look at one essential issue, namely Tillman’s decision to join the military.

The fact is that his decision was badly misguided. He got the Iraq War right, but failed to read enough to know that he did not belong in Afghanistan either. Tillman signed up out of a felt duty to fight Al Qaeda, but when he enlisted in the Army in June 2002, Al Qaeda was

no longer in Afghanistan. The political and military situation in that country was, and had been for a good while, extremely complex. That Tillman apparently had a poor grasp of it shouldn’t surprise us; after all, when he enlisted he was all of 25 years old.

Was this intellectual failure also a moral one, as Rall and others believe? I don’t think so. As we have seen, Tillman was a highly conscientious person who was in the habit of working hard to figure out what was right.

Pat Tillman was not, as Krakauer’s title implies, seeking glory. Rather, he was concerned with honor, which he thought of not in the technical philosophical sense, but in the sense defined by my desk dictionary, of “integrity in one’s beliefs and actions.” Indeed, it seems likely that, if asked, Tillman would have defined honor using a standard definition of integrity, as in “adherence to honesty and to ethical and moral principles” or “soundness of moral character.” Marie Tillman relates that Pat responded “strongly” to the word honor, which, she writes “meant the world to him.” **CP**

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Pat Tillman on parade. Photo: US Army.

CULTURE & REVIEWS

You Don't Have to be a Rocket Scientist to be a Rocket Scientist

My Brother and the Space Program

BY PAUL KRASSNER

When my brother George and I were kids, I could recite the alphabet backwards, whereas he read the entire dictionary. We both played the violin, and when he was nine and I was six, we performed at Carnegie Hall. (I was the youngest concert artist in any field to perform there.) Our younger sister Marge took piano lessons and became a legendary figure at Boys & Girls High School in Brooklyn, teaching music and running the chorus. Now retired, she and two women--one plays the cello, the other a flute--have been booked to perform at the Salvador Dali Museum in St. Petersburg, Florida, playing music connected to various phases of Dali's life.

Marge was the only one who stuck with classical music. Although I was considered a child prodigy, I merely had a technique for playing the violin, but I had a real passion for making people laugh. I put my violin in the closet when I was twelve, and several years later I used it essentially as a prop when I began performing stand-up comedy. George went to the High School of Music & Art, and was offered a four-year scholarship at the Juilliard School's renowned Music Division, but he really preferred Math and Science. He surprised our family, announcing his decision to be an electrical engineer.

He turned down the scholarship and

instead attended CCNY. "Because," he says, "I thought then that the violin was good for my avocation, not my vocation. With so many brilliant musicians then, you really had to know somebody to get anywhere in that world. It's not like YouTube today." While at CCNY, he played with a square dance group and became Official Fiddler for the New York/New Jersey Square Dance Callers Association. He learned that a caller earned twice as much as he did, so he put down his fiddle and took up calling square dances. He was also captain of the varsity boxing team.

George went to the University of Michigan for his Master's Degree. Our mother insisted -- and to please her -- he mailed his laundry home in a light aluminum case she had purchased for that specific purpose. To pay for his tuition, basement apartment and other expenses, he got a teaching fellowship, was a research assistant, sold programs at football games, and bussed tables at a local restaurant, which he quit when the table he cleared was occupied by fellow students. He won the all-campus boxing championship, but had to fight in a heavier weight class since no one else weighed as little as he did.

"Being a violinist, I was worried about my hands. But my opponent in the semi-final match was an oboe player with a concert scheduled for the next day, and he asked me to take it easy on his mouth."

In October 1957, Russia sent Sputnik into space. It was the first orbiting satellite, circling the earth in 96 minutes, and making 1,440 orbits in three months. This astounding technical feat was totally unanticipated by the United States and ignited the era of the space race. At the time, George was working as a civilian scientist for the Army Signal Corps in Fort Monmouth, New Jersey, in charge of the radio

relay program. He had been recruited by their senior executive of Research & Development, an alumnus of the University of Michigan.

A week after Sputnik, George sent a proposal to the Commanding General, urging a space communication program. The response: Do it! "So," George recalls, "I created the first Space Electronics organization in the country. It was very strange making presentations to generals and top government officials. At age twenty-nine, as head of the Astro-Electronics Division, I had the civilian rank equal to a colonel, but I looked like a young kid. It was embarrassing to take them to lunch and be carded by the waiter."

That wasn't his only embarrassment: "At the Signal Corps, I accidentally flushed my top secret badge down the toilet. It took a lot of official paperwork and the notation 'irretrievably lost' to finally get a new badge. Also, in 1954, the McCarthy paranoia was paramount. I, and fellow civilians--and military personnel, I assume--had to empty our lunchboxes and briefcases for inspection every time we entered the building."

Five months after he had begun as a civilian scientist, George was drafted. In the army, he was assigned to the 82nd Airborne Division at Fort Bragg in North Carolina. He was a "leg," though. Instead of jumping out of an airplane, his job was to maintain all radios, phones and electrical equipment. He also started the U.S. Helicopter Square Dance Team to demonstrate the mobility of helicopters. When assigned KP (Kitchen Police), rather than peel potatoes, he scheduled helicopter square dance practice.

Eight months after Sputnik, his team began working on the design of the world's first communication satellite, SCORE (Signal Communications Orbit Relay Equipment). "There were no reference books, precedents, or Google for information. We were the pioneers. It's interesting that the first known reference to communication satellites

was in a 1945 science-fiction story by the British author, Arthur C. Clarke.” It took the team only six months to design and build the satellite, which was launched in December 1958 by an Atlas rocket that weighed 9,000 pounds.

“The satellite payload became famous for the tape-recorded message from President Dwight Eisenhower, who insisted that this project remain top secret,” George tells me. “He said the launch would be aborted if any word leaked out, because he didn’t want a chance of failure to tarnish our image. As it turned out, one of the two tape recorders did fail, but his Christmas message to the world was the very first transmitted message from space.”

Eisenhower stated: “This is the president of the United States speaking. Through the marvels of scientific advance, my voice is coming to you via a satellite circling in outer space. My message is a simple one. Through this unique means, I convey to you and all mankind America’s wish for peace on earth and good will toward men everywhere.”

In 1945, in the wake of World War II, the victors launched Operation Paperclip, recruiting a variety of six hundred scientists from Nazi Germany to work in the United States. President Harry Truman ordered the exclusion of any “member of the Nazi Party or an active supporter of Nazi militarism,” but the Joint Intelligence Objectives Agency created false employment and political biographies to circumvent Truman’s command.

Those scientists were then granted security clearance and infiltrated into hospitals, universities, and the aerospace industry, further developing their techniques in propaganda, mind control, and behavior modification. Among them was Wernher von Braun, who had been a member of the Nazi Party and an SS officer who could be linked to the deaths of thousands of concentration camp prisoners. (Fun fact: He married his cousin.) He came to America in 1945 and became a citizen in 1955. He

was called the “Father of the U.S. space program.”

In June 1958, by the time those German importees had become entrenched in a slew of American niche communities, I published the first issue of my satirical magazine, *The Realist*, including a cartoon that depicted the U.S. Army Guided Missile Research Center with a sign in the window, *Help Wanted*. A couple of scientists are standing in front of that building, and one is saying to the other, “They would have hired me only I don’t speak German.”

Exactly one year later, Wernher von Braun recruited thirteen scientists to work with him on an ultra-top-secret program, Project Horizon, to build a communication station on the moon. Its purpose was a study to determine the feasibility of constructing a scientific/military base. “I was one of the lucky thirteen,” George remembers. “In fact, you don’t have to be a rocket scientist to be a rocket scientist. Von Braun told me that many of his ideas came from science-fiction magazines.

“The project was so secret that the thirteen of us could not even tell our bosses – they didn’t have what was called ‘need to know.’ I would tell [my wife] Judith that I was going to Washington, D.C., and then I would change planes to go to Huntsville, Alabama, where much of the work was done. I made up stories about Washington for her, while I really was in Huntsville, which also was the watercress capital of the world. Unfortunately, when I left the government after nine years (two in the army), I lost my own security rating and need-to-know, so I had no idea if the station was ever built on the moon, and I no longer got cheap watercress.”

According to Wikipedia, “The permanent outpost was predicted to cost \$6 billion and become operational in December 1966. A lunar landing-and-return vehicle would have shuttled up to 16 astronauts at a time to the base and back. Horizon never progressed

past the feasibility stage in an official capacity.”

“When I was assigned to work on top secret military and satellite work,” George tells me, “the FBI did routine checks. One of our neighbors told Judith that the FBI visited them but were told not to let us know of their inquiries. Apparently, you were on their ‘watch list’ – based on your ‘radical’ writings, I assume. I learned from my boss at the Signal Corps that my top-secret clearance was in jeopardy. Granting my clearance took about a month longer than normal, but eventually it was granted.”

Meanwhile, I was placed on the FBI’s RI (Round-up Index), though I had broken no law. Who knows, maybe it was because I published a cartoon depicting a man sitting at a desk, speaking on the phone: “I’m very sorry, but we of the FBI are powerless to act in a case of oral-genital intimacy unless it has in some way obstructed interstate commerce.”

When *Life* magazine ran a favorable profile of me, an FBI agent sent a poison-pen letter to the editor: “To classify Krassner as some sort of ‘social rebel’ is far too cute. He’s a nut, a raving, unconfined nut.” But in 1969, the FBI’s previous attempt at mere character assassination escalated to a more literal approach. This was not included in my own Co-Intel-Pro (Counter-Intelligence Program) files but, rather, a separate FBI project calculated to cause rifts between the black and Jewish communities.

The FBI had produced a WANTED poster featuring a large swastika. In the four square spaces of the swastika were photos of Yippie (Youth International Party) founders Abbie Hoffman, Jerry Rubin and me, and SDS (Students for a Democratic Society) leader Mark Rudd. Underneath the swastika was this headline--LAMP SHADES! LAMP SHADES! LAMP SHADES!--and this message:

“The only solution to Negro problems in America would be the elimination of the Jews. May we suggest the fol-

“To classify Krassner as some sort of ‘social rebel’ is far too cute. He’s a nut, a raving, unconfined nut.”

lowing order of elimination? (After all, we’ve been this way before.) *All Jews connected with the Establishment.

*All Jews connected with Jews connected with the Establishment.

*All Jews connected with those immediately above.

*All Jews except those in the Movement.

*All Jews in the Movement except those who dye their skins black.

*All Jews. Look out, Abbie, Jerry, Paul and Mark!” (Shades of Wernher von Braun.)

It was approved by FBI director J. Edgar Hoover’s top two aides: “Authority is granted to prepare and distribute on an anonymous basis to selected individuals and organizations in the New Left the leaflet submitted. Assure that all necessary precautions are taken to protect the Bureau as the source of these leaflets. This leaflet suggests facetiously the elimination of these leaders.” And, of course, if a black militant obtained that flyer and eliminated one of those “New Left leaders who are Jewish,” the FBI’s bureaucratic ass would be covered: “We *said* it was a facetious suggestion, didn’t we?”

On top of that, my name was on a list of sixty-five “radical” campus speakers, released by the House Internal Security Committee. The blacklist was published in the *New York Times*, and picked up by newspapers across the country. It might have been a coincidence, but my campus speaking engagements stopped abruptly.

When I was assigned to write a piece for the *Los Angeles Times*, I titled it “I Was a Comedian for the FBI,” because I mentioned that I had once recognized a pair of FBI agents taking notes while I was performing at the Community Church in New York. My FBI files later stated that I “purported to be humorous about the government.” Since when

did taxpayers provide the funds to cover the FBI’s theater critics squad?

The banner headline on the cover of that *L.A. Times Sunday Calendar* section blared out: *Paul Krassner – “I Was a Communist for the FBI!”* In the *San Francisco Chronicle*, columnist Herb Caen wrote, “Fearing Krassner would sue, the *Times* recalled and destroyed some 300,000 copies at a cost of about \$100,000. Krassner would have laughed, not sued.” Or maybe I would’ve sued *and* laughed my ass off.

By 1963, George had risen to Chief Scientist, Astro-Electronics Division at the Signal Corps, and McGraw-Hill contacted him, asking if he would write a book. And indeed, he began working on *Introduction to Space Communication*, which became the world’s first book on that subject.

“The problem was the incredible pace of technology,” he says. “While I was writing Chapter 5, the nuggets of wisdom in Chapter 2 were becoming obsolete. The last chapter was called ‘Ad Astra’ (Latin for ‘to the stars’), where I tried to forecast future technology. When the book was published in 1964, most of my future projections were already obsolete. Darwin had no idea about the speed of evolution when applied to technology. By the way, more copies of the book were sold in Russia than in the United States.”

On George’s last active project, he worked with the original seven astronauts. He was program manager at Simmonds Precision, responsible for the design of the fuel gauging system on the command module where the astronauts were housed. In 1972, Apollo 17, the eleventh manned mission, was the sixth and final lunar landing in the Apollo program. “We were on an extremely tight schedule, and my team worked nearly eighty hours with virtually no sleep to finish on time. We re-

ceived a rare commendation and bonus from NASA for superior performance ahead of schedule and below budget.”

Gordon Cooper – one of those seven original astronauts – had piloted the longest and final Mercury space flight in 1963, becoming the first American to sleep in orbit. “He gave me a rare souvenir,” George now reminds me, “a dehydrated oatmeal cookie the size of a large dice that he had on a space mission. During a family dinner, I passed around the cookie for everyone to see. Dad was hard of hearing and didn’t hear the story, so he popped the space cookie into his mouth, and it was gone before I could get any words out of my mouth. It was pure grief when it happened, but funny now.”

As I write this, George is 85, and if a movie were to be made about him, he’d like to be portrayed by Matt Damon. In October 1988, he was diagnosed with advanced prostate cancer and given three years to live, but his daughter Devra, a naturopath, convinced him to meet with a macrobiotic counselor, and overnight he changed his diet and lifestyle. Now it’s twenty-six years later.

He played tennis until six months ago, when he discontinued after a bad fall, because he was playing too aggressively. Currently, his exercise consists of taking walks and lifting dumbbells, though not simultaneously. He remains active, doing business seminars for adult education, providing legal plans for families, small businesses and employees, and calling square dances. But not for helicopters. Or drones. **CP**

PAUL KRASSNER’s latest book is an expanded and updated edition of his autobiography, *Confessions of a Raving, Unconfined Nut: Misadventures in the Counterculture*--visit paulkrassner.com.

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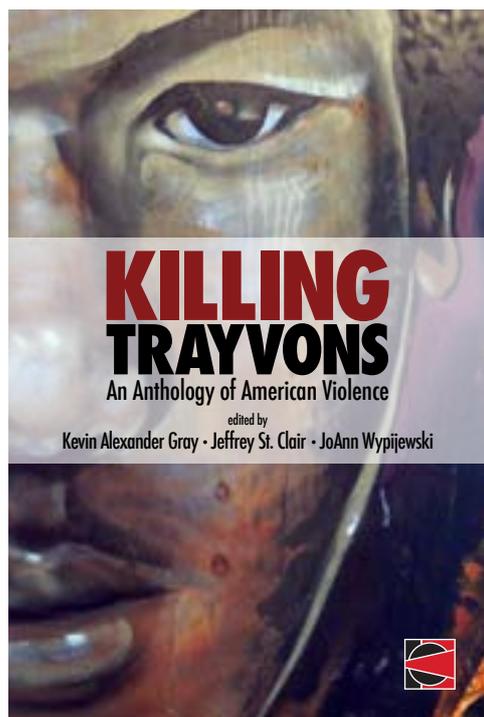
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