

# SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

JOURNAL OF THE PROGRESSIVE SOUTH

SPRING 2003 \$5.00

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of Domestic Violence  
When Troops Return  
from War

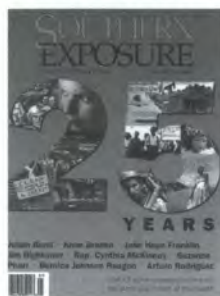


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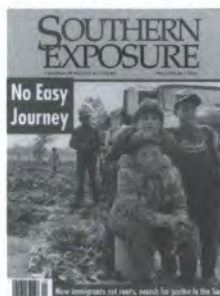
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# SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

**Southern Exposure** has been published since 1973 by the Institute for Southern Studies. With its combination of investigative reporting, historical perspective, oral histories, photography, and literature, the magazine has earned a national reputation. The magazine has received several Project Censored Awards; the Sidney Hillman Award for courageous reporting on racial injustice; two Alternative Press Awards for best regional publication; a National Magazine Award; and the John Hancock Insurance Company award for economic reporting.

**The Institute for Southern Studies** is a nonprofit center working for progressive change in the region. Since its founding in 1970, the Institute has sponsored research, education, and organizing programs to (1) build the capacity of grassroots organizations and communities with strong local leadership and well-informed strategies, (2) provide the information, ideas, and historical understanding of Southern social struggles necessary for long-term fundamental change, and (3) nourish communication, cooperation, and understanding among diverse groups.

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COVER PHOTO: Antonio Mo

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# SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

SPRING 2003

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## FRONT PORCH: LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

# THE WAR AT HOME

"Did you hear about London? Over a million people!"

"No way! They're saying over two million in Spain."

"Sydney, Australia had 200,000-plus. Germany and France were huge."

"This is big. Real big."

The excitement sparking through the crowd gathered in Raleigh, North Carolina on February 15 was unmistakable: the excitement of making history.

Publicly, our organizing team projected that the March & Rally for Peace and Justice at the state's capitol would draw "thousands" of people concerned about the rush to war in Iraq. But with only two weeks to pull it off, in private we agreed that if 2,000 showed, we'd call it a success.

And then, in waves, they came. Families pushing strollers. Veterans clustered around the flag. Republicans hoisting signs announcing their shifting allegiances.

And still they came: militant students and youth chanting into bullhorns. Representatives from Black Workers for Justice, Advocacy for North Carolina Asian Pacific Islanders, the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. A much-watched contingent of Belly Dancers for Peace and Justice.

By the end of the day, over 7,500 North Carolinians (we counted) had descended on Raleigh to say no to war. Interviews of marchers featured in the local *Independent Weekly* revealed that many made the hours-long trek for the first protest of their lives—often inspired by having a family member deployed to fight what they view as a dangerous, unjust, and unnecessary war.

War hits close to home in the South. As documented in the pages of *SE*, more of our region's sons and daughters are in the armed forces, more of our economy is dependent on military bases and weapons contracts, and more of our politicians are hawks for war than in any other part of the country.

So the tidal wave of protest that ripped across the globe on February 15 for "A World Says No to War" day—10 million strong, on every continent, making it perhaps the biggest global gathering in history—had special meaning in our region.

For one, Southerners yearning for peace don't have the luxury of viewing those in the military as a distant "other." In the South, there are few (if any) degrees of separation between the peace activists and the men and women in the services, which is why the 2,500 who marched in Asheville, N.C., on February 15 drew a warm reception for their central slogan: "Support our Troops/Bring them Home!"

The South's intimate entanglement with militarism also

## FRONT PORCH: LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

creates a culture uniquely hostile to dissent. In states such as North Carolina, which is deploying the country's highest number of military personnel per capita, news outlets are especially reluctant to balance their coverage of troops shipping out with stories about citizens questioning the war.

One result of media silence and war-tilted coverage is a profound sense of isolation among those skeptical of U.S. policy. For months, the country's growing anti-war sentiment was relegated to furtive conversations on neighborhood corners, in workplaces, schools, and churches.

But finally, voices for peace broke the media blockade, after people organized in numbers so large that they could no longer be ignored. The mounting protests in the streets opened up an entire national conversation about war.

Above all, movements are about becoming part of something bigger than ourselves, about transcending lonely acts of desperation and sensing the power of joining with other souls and minds in common cause.

The cause of peace has now become a movement, and regardless of the course of war in Iraq or elsewhere, the impact will be lasting. Millions of people have seen their lives permanently changed. Those resisting the march to war, in ways big and small, have found their voice, tasted real democracy, and forged bonds of solidarity that won't be easily displaced.

The onset of war cannot change the fact that we've already made history. And we need to continue making it.

### ANOTHER SOUTHERNER FOR PEACE

*Southern Exposure* was also represented at America's biggest February 15 peace demonstration, in New York City. *SE* Associate Editor Rania Masri joined the stage with Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Susan Sarandon, and civil rights leader Julian Bond (also part of the *SE* family, as co-founder of *SE's* publisher, the Institute for Southern Studies) to address the crowd of some half-million marchers.

Looking for some inspiration, I called Rania halfway through our humble Raleigh demonstration to see what was happening in the big city. She sounded out of breath.

"There are people everywhere, but the police are stopping people and randomly detaining them. The march is huge."

"Oh really? Well it looks like we've got between five and ten thousand here," I reported.

The cell-voice crackled back: "That's bigger than Tokyo! I wish I was in North Carolina."

Rania has had more than Carolina on her mind as Director of the Institute's Southern Peace Research and Education Center. In the last year, she has presented over 100 workshops and lectures on alternatives to war across the country (and four countries, most recently the World Social Forum in Brazil).

She has also made over 70 media appearances, providing a vital independent voice on shows including Fox National, MSNBC, ABC News, Geraldo, NPR, and dozens of local TV, radio and newspaper outlets.

The aim of the Center is to serve as a resource for the Southern peace movement, providing information and education tools such as fact sheets, analysis of Southern military contracts, and a Speakers' and Organizers' Bureau of experts to inform and inspire those working for alternatives to militarism.

To bring a speaker to your area, order Center publications, or for other information, see the ad on page 62, or contact Rania at [rania@southernstudies.org](mailto:rania@southernstudies.org) or (919) 419-8311 x27.

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Photo by Keith Ernst

## For Love and Liberty: Tampeños Remember the Spanish Civil War

**TAMPA, FL—WHEN THE UNITED STATES ADOPTED A POLICY OF** strict neutrality during the Spanish Civil War in the 1930s, cigar workers in Tampa refused to stand idly by. This community of Spanish, Cuban, and Italian workers and their families boasted a “long tradition of labor activism and radical politics,” as well as the third-largest Spanish immigrant population in the United States, according to Fraser Ottanelli, a history professor at the University of South Florida. The cigar workers, says Ottanelli, saw General Francisco Franco’s rebellion against the democratically elected, leftist Spanish government as part of a “global attack against democracy.”

From 1936 to 1939, 24 volunteers from Tampa—all of whom were Latino, except for one, who was Jewish – joined with 2,800 other Americans to form the Abraham Lincoln Brigades, the first racially integrated military unit in U.S. history, led by the first black commander. Violating the State Department’s prohibition against travel to Spain, they crossed the Pyrenees to defend the Spanish Republican government against Franco as part of the International Brigades, a force of 35,000 men and women

from over 40 different countries. Over the course of the war, more than one-third of the American volunteers, roughly 940 men and women, were killed.

On November 2, 2002, those Tampeños who felt compelled to protect democracy and fight fascism at home and on the battlefield were honored with a monument at the Centro Asturiano de Tampa, consisting of a 3,700-pound rock from Spain’s Ebro Valley, site of the last battle in which the International Brigades participated. In the 1930s, the Centro Asturiano was home to a Spanish mutual aid society, an organization that provided medical assistance to Spanish immigrants. Located in Ybor City, the Latin district of Tampa, the institution provided a fertile breeding ground for support of the war effort.



**Tampeños protest the bombing of Guernica by German planes working with Franco’s forces in 1937. Courtesy Centro Asturiano de Tampa.**

The day before the dedication, vandals covered the monument with white paint. It is still undecided whether the rock will be cleaned or the paint left as a reminder of the Lincoln Brigades’ struggles, both abroad and at home.

In fact, the Tampeño effort against fascism was fought mostly at home, not on the front lines. Immigrant life in what was once known as the “Cigar Capital of the World” revolved around the cigar industry. Spanish, Italian, and Cuban workers listened to readings from international and national labor publications in cigar factories, mutual aid societies, and other meeting places, fostering a strong political consciousness and sense of solidarity. Tampa Latinos created the Democratic Popular Committee to Aid Spain, held demonstrations, and raised money to support the Loyalists. “There was a

## SOUTHERN NEWS ROUNDUP

strong pro-republican feeling here in Tampa, from the oldest to the youngest,” says Willie Garcia, community relations director at the Centro Asturiano. In a matter of three years, they raised \$200,000, roughly \$1.57 million by today’s standards. They sent four ambulances, several thousand cans of milk, 20 tons of clothes, and six million cigarettes. Even the children joined in, collecting foil wrappers from cigarette packs, and selling churros on street corners. What made the Latino community in Tampa so remarkable, says Garcia, was their “love for liberty and sympathy for the people, rather than autocratic government.”

While Tampa survivors returned home to a hero’s welcome within the Latino community in Ybor City, many Lincoln Brigade veterans faced a more hostile reception, dismissed by some as “premature anti-fascists.” More than 60 percent of U.S. volunteers were members of the Communist Party, and many fell victim to the witch hunts of the McCarthy era. But the pro-republican sentiment that inspired Tampeños to join the Brigades stemmed less from communist ideology than from liberal political ideals and familial ties to Republican Spain, says Garcia. Outside Ybor City, however, they were treated with the same hostility as their fellow volunteers. Like many Lincoln Brigaders, several of the Tampa volunteers later faced difficulties trying to serve in the U.S. armed forces; one was forced to change his name merely in order to enlist.

With the support of Mussolini and Hitler, Franco was able to defeat the International Brigades. But the foresight and courage of the Tampeños and volunteers of the Lincoln Brigade to protect the values of democracy demand the attention of more than just those who were involved. It’s a lesson largely absent from the pages of American history books, but art and photography exhibits have recently memorialized the experience of the Lincoln Brigades, and monuments have been dedicated in Seattle and Madison, Wis.

Local efforts in the Tampa community, such as an oral history project by historian Ana Varela-Lago, continue to reveal a movement all but forgotten now and often despised in its day, but vindicated by subsequent events. “We got beat by some very, very bad people,” says Garcia, “and it took a World War to show them they were wrong.”

—CRYSTAL TAYLOR

## Defying Gravity: Texans Take On Longhorn Pipeline

**AUSTIN, TX—A GROUP OF INVESTORS WANTS TO REACTIVATE A** leaky, decrepit, 50-year-old oil pipeline that passes through urban neighborhoods and sensitive watersheds in Texas—but so far, citizen opposition has stalled the project.

In Central Texas, especially the environmentally conscious state capital, Austin, the Longhorn Pipeline has been a major issue since 1995. That’s when the Longhorn Partners Pipeline Company bought an old Exxon pipeline, built in 1950 and used for decades to flow crude oil from the West Texas fields downhill to Gulf Coast refineries. The partners planned to extend the line by 250 miles and pump refined petroleum—gasoline, diesel, and aviation fuels—in the opposite direction, under

**Posters used to rally support for the Spanish Republican government against fascist rebels. Courtesy Abraham Lincoln Brigades Archives.**



**Madrid—7 de Noviembre—No Pasaran!:** “Madrid— November 7th—They Shall Not Pass!” [1937]



**Al Front!:** “To The Front!” [1936]



**Section of pipe over Marble Creek in Southeast Austin. This pipe was actually replaced with new pipe. Photo courtesy of Stefan Wray.**

pressure uphill, from Houston to El Paso and Odessa.

But revelations about the pipeline's history of leaks and its current, dangerous condition quickly galvanized vigorous opposition in the Austin area and (to a lesser degree) the Hill Country west of the capital. The old Exxon line, constructed using a now-discredited process, had a dubious safety record. In 1979, for example, the pipeline burst along a longitudinal weld seam and spilled over a million gallons of crude onto a rancher's land in London, Texas. A former Exxon employee has stepped forward with details about a 1995 study that found 4,800 "pipeline anomalies," or places where corrosion may have made the pipe's walls dangerously thin. And, since the old Exxon line relied on gravity to transport crude downhill, critics fear that using pressure to pump gas uphill could be especially dangerous, given the pipe's precarious condition.

Attorneys representing Hill Country ranchers and Austin area water districts filed a lawsuit in federal district court, arguing that before the Longhorn Pipeline goes through, an Environmental Impact Study (EIS) should be performed. A temporary injunction kept the pipeline dry

while federal agencies haggled over whether to conduct an EIS or a less rigorous Environmental Assessment (EA).

The U.S. Department of Transportation's Office of Pipeline Safety—which, critics charge, is effectively an advocate for the oil industry—wanted the weaker EA, while the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency was initially in favor of the stronger EIS. The agencies were at an impasse. Ultimately the matter was thrown into the Clinton White House, where the Council on Environmental Quality made the final determination to require only an EA, albeit with some mitigation measures required over what came to be called "hypersensitive areas."

In the end, some sections of the old pipe—about 19 miles, in southwest Austin over the Barton Springs aquifer—were replaced. But the vast majority of the old line from Houston to Crane (in West Texas) remains intact with no modification or even inspection.

In July, 2002, a federal judge in Austin—who had publicly expressed his deep concern over what he called the "decrepit" condition of the pipeline—ruled that the government could not be forced to do an Environmental Impact Study, and that the Environmental Assessment with a few mitigation measures thrown in was enough. His decision is being appealed to the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans. The Office of Pipeline Safety has yet to sign off on Longhorn's spill response plan.

In the meantime, Texans of all stripes, from Austin's congressman, the mayor, city council members, and heads of water districts to PTA presidents, neighborhood association leaders, and environmental groups, have come out against the project. The Longhorn Pipeline is far from a done deal.

—STEFAN WRAY



For more information on the Longhorn Pipeline go to [www.PipelineAction.org](http://www.PipelineAction.org). Iconmedia has produced a video documentary, "Defying Gravity: Texans Take On the Longhorn Pipeline," produced and directed by Pam Thompson and Stefan Wray. For more information write to Iconmedia, P.O. Box 716, Austin, TX 78767, or go to [www.iconmedia.org/longhornvideo](http://www.iconmedia.org/longhornvideo).

## Revolution at Wal-Mart? A People's Campaign to Tame the Nation's Biggest Corporation

**IT MAY SEEM LIKE AN IMPOSSIBLE TASK TO SOME, BUT WORKERS** and activists are trying to unionize one of the most virulently anti-union corporations in the world.

Workers, consumers, and communities have helped build Wal-Mart, based in Bentonville, Arkansas, into one of the country's most powerful economic forces, and its largest employer. Yet Wal-Mart notoriously disregards the needs and concerns of the people responsible for its rise to the top. Paying low wages, forcing its "associates" (employees) to work off the clock, discriminating against minorities, gays, and lesbians, and intimidating pro-union workers are among the many charges that have been levied against the retail giant.

On November 18, United Food and Commercial Workers International president Doug Dority announced the launch of the People's Campaign—Justice @ Wal-Mart, a unified effort to organize Wal-Mart workers across the nation. Supported by a broad coalition of labor and religious leaders and workers' rights activists, the People's Campaign seeks, in Dority's words, to be "a national catalyst for local action [with] grassroots community coalitions in every state, city, town, village, and neighborhood. The People's Campaign is America rising—re-asserting its values, providing for its families, and protecting its communities."

The People's Campaign is demanding, among other things, that Wal-Mart provide its workers with a living wage and affordable health care benefits. According to Dority, the company's practices affect more than its own employees, since Wal-Mart's enormous purchasing power means it effectively also sets wage and benefits standards for "tens of thousands of companies that produce the goods that fill Wal-Mart's shelves."

The UFCW has a particular interest in organizing Wal-Mart workers. The corporation's entry into the retail food business is placing tremendous economic pressure on supermarkets,



**Many communities resist the arrival of Wal-Mart stores, which ravage local businesses and drive down wages. Photo courtesy of United Food and Commercial Workers.**

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**Wal-Mart workers demand a living wage and affordable health care. Photo courtesy of United Food and Commercial Workers.**

threatening to lower wages and benefits for the union's 1.4 million members, many of them grocery store workers.

Dority's announcement was followed by a National Day of Action on November 21, when more than 100 events and rallies were held in towns and cities across the country. UFCW spokesperson Jill Cashen said that after the event the UFCW "received hundreds of calls from around the country" from workers interested in organizing. She also said that many local organizing campaigns are currently in progress.

Although Wal-Mart claims it is not against unionization, the company provides management with a pamphlet entitled *The Manager's Toolbox to Remaining Union Free*, and has become known for using strong-arm tactics to combat efforts to organize its associates. In February, 2000, despite management's attempts to intimidate workers and delay an election, the meat department at a Wal-Mart Supercenter in Jacksonville, Texas, voted 7-3 in favor of unionization. Just weeks after the vote, Wal-Mart eliminated the meat-cutting staff there, and announced it would begin stocking pre-cut meats in all its Supercenters, thus ending its need for meat cutters nationwide. (The company claimed this move had been in the works for months.) According to the UFCW, Wal-Mart then tried to prevent a union election by meat and seafood department employees at a Wal-Mart in Palestine, Texas, saying that voting should not go forward since employee responsibilities would change when the Supercenter switched to "case-ready" meats. The union also accuses Wal-Mart of illegally suppressing a union drive among its meat market employees in Ocala, Fla.

The UFCW's Cashen said that a current focal point for the People's Campaign is Aiken, S.C., where Wal-Mart workers have begun an organizing campaign. On February 10 an administrative law judge heard complaints by the National Labor Relations Board accusing Wal-Mart managers there of threatening pro-union workers and ignoring the rights of employees to have witnesses present during disciplinary meetings with management. Known as "Weingarten rights," these are well-established in NLRB practice, and are especially important for Wal-Mart workers, according to the UFCW, because standard company procedure is to "surround employees with an intimidating group of managers." Judgment in the Aiken case is pending.

Wal-Mart has been charged with illegal surveillance and intimidation of its associates in Paris, Texas, and Orlando, Fla. Altogether, 45 NLRB complaints have recently been lodged against Wal-Mart in 25 states. The company has been found guilty in ten of those cases; it has settled eight, and the rest are pending. Meanwhile, said Cashen, a previously vigorous campaign in Florida has "dissipated some" as a result of workers being fired for their unionizing activities.

The next large-scale demonstration against Wal-Mart will take place at the Corporate Campaign Working Group's annual Empowering Democracy conference, which will be held in Fayetteville, Ark., to coincide with Wal-Mart's annual shareholders meeting on June 6. According to Conference Coordinator Amita Lonial, the purpose of the conference is to "teach basic skills and tactics that

organizers can use" on corporate accountability campaigns. "After you learn all these skills you follow it up with a day of action," Lonial said. Some conference participants will demonstrate outside the meeting, while those who are also Wal-Mart shareholders will go into the meeting and try to pass resolutions.

High turnover, low pay, the location of many Wal-Marts in rural areas with little or no union tradition, and the company's strength in anti-union states, together with its vast resources and willingness to take illegal action, make organizing a difficult proposition for Wal-Mart employees. The corporation has staved off unionization for decades, and *Business Week* has concluded that, "given its superior firepower, it may be able to do so for years to come." In a speech before the National Association of Letter Carriers last August, Doug Dority expressed optimism while acknowledging the immensity of the task faced by the People's Campaign: "We have no delusions about how difficult the job will be, but I have no doubt that we will win."

—GANEY MOZLEY

## Architect for the People: Designing Better Homes for Migrant Workers

**IMAGINE LIVING FOR MONTHS AT A TIME IN A LOW-CEILINGED, barracks-style bunker, often called a "bull pen."** Imagine sleeping in the same room with 11 other people in a place that provides only one showerhead for every ten people, one laundry tub for every 30, and one toilet for every 15 people.

Although this is a typical "home" for migrant workers living in farmer-provided housing, architect Bryan Bell imagined something better. For the past 14 years, Bell has been designing cost-efficient housing that meets the needs and cultural preferences of workers.

Bell began designing migrant worker housing in 1989 in Adams County, Pa., as an employee of Rural Opportunities, Inc., a non-profit group that provides services to farm workers, low-income families, and economically depressed communities. His work with Rural Opportunities was very different from the job he landed fresh out of graduate school. After earning his Master's degree at Yale University, he was hired by a prominent New York architectural firm where he designed lofts and other interior spaces. But he quickly became dissatisfied with his work. "I was doing plastic surgery and, in reality, I wanted to be in the emergency room," Bell said.

Bell left his lucrative firm after only one year, turning his sights to housing non-profits. He says that his understanding of how a well-designed shelter can have a positive impact on people is a motivating factor in his work. Another is his admiration for farm workers. "I truly respect farm workers and the amount of work they do," he said. "It's a pleasure to serve them."

In 1997 Bell founded Design Corps, a not-for-profit agency which works on migrant and other low-income housing, and, in addition, helps to educate young designers interested in service work. Bell says the mission of Design Corps is one of both service and education; and the agency's philosophy is that "people should be involved in the decisions that shape their lives, including their built environment." He

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says, "People often don't have the opportunity to participate with an architect. Along with that, there is the obvious need for better housing and schools."

In January 2000, Bell relocated his agency to Raleigh, N.C. He says that through his contact with Melinda Wiggins of Student Action With Farm Workers in Durham, N.C., he met others who were working for the interests of migrant workers in the South, and he discovered that "no one was addressing the housing issue here."

Bell is currently working on two migrant housing projects in Virginia and one in South Carolina, as well as projects in Pennsylvania. In addition, he is in the final stages of a bathroom design for a migrant camp in Clinton, N.C. Bell says that project designs vary with the type of worker and the length of the growing season. Many migrant workers are mobile and don't intend to put down roots where they work, but

instead return to their home countries after the growing season. These workers don't necessarily want living quarters that represent permanency. Bell takes these fundamentals into account when creating his designs. While designing the Adams County, Pennsylvania, housing, he and an associate at Rural Opportunities collected ideas from farmers and migrant workers. They determined that the best housing design would be a small house with a kitchen and bath making it suitable for lodging a small group of single workers or a family.

For the South Carolina project, Bell is designing housing for a nursery farmer who has purchased property especially for the project. The design will house up to eight workers, down from sixteen in the current available housing; and it incorporates facilities for married couples.

Bell says that farmers are often enthusiastic about the projects. He says an incentive to farmers is that "the cost is cheaper to build good than bad [housing]." Bell has developed a program in which the farmer provides the land as well as sewer and other utilities, and he also pays for half the materials and construction costs. The remaining costs are paid by government grants obtained by Bell's agency. The program makes farmer participation easy; and when the grant money is included, the cost to the farmer is less than if he were to build the traditional

barracks-style housing.

Bell says that by using government grant money, his agency "can put strings on the grant for farmers" and add to the requirements set by the Department of Labor. He says he can tack on restrictions to the contracts and require farmers to include such amenities as sufficient shower heads, sinks, refrigerators, washer/dryers, and air conditioning. In South Carolina, farm workers are not included in the Landlord Tenant Law. This law can be instituted under the program so that the farmer is required to treat the worker as a tenant.

Another project that Bell is excited about is designing houses for workers who want to leave the migrant life and settle into their communities—a concept called "self-help"



**Migrant farmworkers endure cramped, ramshackle quarters with inadequate heating, lighting, and plumbing. Photo courtesy of NC Legal Aid.**

housing. The homes are built with participation of the owners. "They build houses for each other," Bell said. He is hoping to try such a project in North Carolina.

As an adjunct faculty member at N.C. State University, Bell has been able to extend his people-centered architecture to other venues through service projects. Currently students are drafting a redesign plan for the town of Seaboard, N.C., which has a population of 800 people, 80 percent of whom are African Americans. The town, which has an annual budget of only \$75,000, is plagued with vacant land and buildings. Students will contribute approximately \$100,000 in volunteer hours to help Seaboard residents re-envision their town with a design including such facilities as new schools, playgrounds, and a library.

—GANEY MOZLEY

For further information about Design Corps: [www.designcorps.org](http://www.designcorps.org)

## Eugenics in North Carolina: Thousands Were Sterilized by the State

### THE FUROR OVER MISSISSIPPI SEN. TRENT LOTT'S REMARKS

praising Strom Thurmond's segregationist presidential bid reminded Southerners that shadows still linger from decades of white supremacy and Jim Crow. So it was fitting that last December, when Lott was on the hot seat, a little sunlight seeped into one of the darkest corners of North Carolina's history. A five-day *Winston-Salem Journal* series, "Against Their Will: North Carolina's Sterilization Programs," provided the first in-depth account of the state's eugenics efforts—targeting mostly the poor and people of color—and of the terrible toll, in the form of stunted lives, that those efforts wrought.

The numbers reported in the *Journal* articles begin to tell the story. Between 1929 and 1974, state government eugenics boards authorized the surgical sterilization of more than 7,600 North Carolinians deemed to be "feebleminded," "moronic," "delinquent," or "promiscuous," as the administrative papers put it. More than 2,000 of the victims were under age 18. Ninety-nine percent were women. Tellingly, as the civil rights movement gathered steam in the 1960s, the sterilizations, which already disproportionately targeted African Americans, were increasingly meted out against young blacks.

North Carolina, the series reveals, was a hot-bed of private and public support for such so-called "human betterment." After California and Virginia, the state conducted the third highest number of sterilizations in the country. Enthusiasm for eugenics—even following the disclosure of the Nazis' horrific endeavors in the field—ran high in the South after World War II. Economic elites, civic leaders, and social scientists saw an aggressive sterilization program as a means to "improve the race" while shrinking the welfare roles and reducing the black population along the way.

The newspaper series goes beyond the numbers and logistics, sharing testimony from several living victims as well as some of the retired doctors, social workers, and state officials who had a hand in authorizing and promoting the practice. The lasting

pain left by social engineering run amuck is evidenced by stories like that of Elaine Riddick Jessie, who was an Edenton 14-year-old when she gave birth to her only child in 1968. Hours after she gave birth, a doctor “tied her tubes” on orders of the state. “It is the most degrading thing, the most humiliating thing a person can do to a person is to take away a God-given right,” Jessie told the *Journal*.

The revelations in the *Journal* prompted a long-overdue mea culpa. “On behalf of the state I deeply apologize to the victims and their families for this past injustice, and for the pain and suffering they had to endure over the years,” Gov. Mike Easley said December 12. “This is a sad and regrettable chapter in the state’s history, and it must be one that is never repeated again.”

Apologies are a good start, civil rights and mental health advocates say. But, as North Carolina NAACP director Skip Alston has argued, some form of restitution for the surviving victims—perhaps reparations—will now be expected. Alston is pushing for the state legislature to hold hearings on the matter, and says the NAACP will hold its own public hearings around the state.

And there’s at least one additional significant step the state can make to come clean on what was long a dirty secret: tell the whole story by publicly releasing the files of the eugenics program. According to the state archives in Raleigh, an estimated 50 cubic feet of records on the program remain under official seal. While state and federal laws forbid disclosing the personal data in the files, such information could be redacted from the documents prior to release, opening up a valuable historical resource and promoting greater accountability.

Meanwhile, other states are also beginning to take a hard look at their former eugenics programs. On January 9, South Carolina Gov. Jim Hodges issued the state’s first apology for its program, which led to the sterilization of more than 250 people—again, most of them poor African Americans. A week earlier, the Disabled Action Committee, a national advocacy group, launched a campaign to urge President Bush to apologize for the federal government’s involvement in eugenics programs, which existed in at least 33 states and sterilized an estimated 65,000 people.

*The Winston-Salem Journal series may be found online at <http://againsttheirwill.journalnow.com>.*

—JON ELLISTON

### CONTRIBUTORS:

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## THE SOUTH AT WAR

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For as long as current events warrant, *Southern Exposure* will run THE SOUTH AT WAR as a regular section to keep readers informed about the South's role in the defense industry, U.S. aggression overseas, and the increasing militarization of American culture.

# SOUTHERNERS TAKE TO THE STREETS

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## ON THE EVE OF WAR, A MOVEMENT FOUND ITS VOICE

BY HART MATTHEWS

PHOTOS BY HART MATTHEWS

**A**s the home base of the oil oligarchs dominating U.S. politics, perhaps it's fitting that Texas should also be the home of some of the earliest and most persistent Southern protests against the Bush administration's push for military action in Iraq.

Unlike many in the national news media, Texans seemed to sense early that George W. Bush's war talk was more than just diplomatic strategy. True, liberal Texans may be more endangered than the Pecos pupfish, but what they lacked in numbers, they made up for in persistence.

Starting in the spring of 2002, Texas activists took the anti-war movement home to President Bush during his frequent sabbaticals in Crawford. They kept it up through the summer and into the fall, hitting Republican fundraisers and spawning the catchiest organization name of the movement: Bush's Backyard Surprise Committee. As soon as the fall term began, University of Texas students in Austin and San Antonio began holding regular anti-war demonstrations.

One long-time Texas protester hit the national news again in the fall. It was reported by the national news media that Diane Wilson, a self-described humble "fisherwoman" and 54-year-old grandmother from Seadrift, about an hour north of Corpus Christi, had been arrested Oct. 2 after she tried to scale the White House fence. Wilson, who is famous for trying to scuttle her shrimp boat on a wastewa-

ter outflow in the Gulf twelve years ago, was only trying to hang a banner from the fence, not rush the White House, but a D.C. judge banned her from a three-block radius around the Presidential mansion.

Wilson had already succeeded, two weeks earlier with Global Exchange founder Medea Benjamin, in unfurling an anti-war banner behind Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld as he testified in front of the House Armed Services Committee. Despite the court order, just before Thanksgiving she returned to D.C. for the Code Pink protest in Lafayette Park across from the White House. Police ignored her presence for a few days until she tried to erect a temporary shelter against the wind. When she argued with police, Wilson was arrested again and spent Thanksgiving in jail. Diane Wilson headed back to Texas demanding inspections of Bush's "presidential palace" in Crawford. She vowed to return to Washington for the March 8 International Women's Day demonstrations.

By mid-October, more than 1,500 protesters had hit the Austin streets for one rally, and three activists were cited by police for refusing to leave a sit-in at the office of U.S. Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison (R), a supporter of the Congressional resolution authorizing the use of military force in Iraq. A few days later the student government at the University of Texas in Austin passed an anti-war resolution.

Small-scale protests were so consistent in Austin through



**ANTI-WAR RALLY IN RALEIGH, N.C.**

**The following pages document photos of the more than 7,500 people who converged on Raleigh, North Carolina, on February 15, 2003, for the "A World Says No to War" protests. Protests located elsewhere are indicated by their captions.**

the fall that the *Austin American Statesman* felt compelled to remind its conservative readers on December 22 that the University of Texas student body included "more than 300 members of the Army, Navy and Air Force ROTC," who were coping just fine on the UT campus. The editorial concluded that "liberal professors and a few dozen protesters do not a university make."

Houston activist Herbert Rothschild, 63 years old and one of those arrested at Senator Hutchison's office in November, said even in Houston he hasn't seen support for a war. "It's amazing how quiet the pro-war side is," said Rothschild. "A few people say ugly things, but they're enormously outnumbered by the supportive feedback."

**A**nti-war protests across the South last fall seemed to follow the Texas pattern: small weekly or monthly actions in more liberal areas or at strategic locations, livened up with larger events for world-wide protest days. Media coverage in some states has been so lax that it's nearly impossible to tell if there were any protests



## THE SOUTH AT WAR

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beyond the two international actions on October 26 and January 18.

In northern Mississippi, several hundred protesters convened in Starkville and Tupelo on January 18. Kentucky hosted protests in Louisville and Richmond around the large January demonstrations. The only mentions of anti-war action in Arkansas were small gatherings in Little Rock on those two days.

In Alabama, a search of newspaper archives turned up

no prominent mentions of the January 18 rally in Washington, D.C., that turned out more than a hundred thousand people. Despite being next door to the nation's capital, Virginia newspapers didn't seem to notice the October protests in D.C. The local protest that made a lead story in the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* involved seven anarchist protesters arrested on December 21 for "unlawful assembly." Like much of the South, Virginia sent activists to the January 18 gathering in Washington, and about 40 people demonstrated that day in Blacksburg.

Even where they were poorly reported, however, small regular protests seem to have been common across the South. One article from Huntsville, Alabama, mentions in passing that a peace group protested at the Madison County Courthouse every week. Nashville was the site of regular protests. The *Times-Picayune*, in a large

article in late January, hinted that New Orleans activists had managed to turn out a couple hundred people at regular intervals.

Honorable mention for thorough coverage goes to the newspapers of Charleston, West Virginia, particularly the *Charleston Gazette*, for running nearly every wire story about national and international rallies, even though that state's protests seem to have been limited in size and relegated to the state capital. Charleston did, however, turn out a

## THE SOUTH AT WAR



thousand people for Martin Luther King, Jr., Day.

In Atlanta, activists targeted Senator Zell Miller (D) every week after Miller supported the Congressional resolution authorizing military action. One sit-in at Miller's office resulted in the arrest of three activists. Tenacious South Carolina activists got Charleston's Marion Park opened to protesters after a brief legal dispute with the two Civil War-era militia groups that administer the public park. Activists in North Carolina began organizing on a statewide level in the early fall and held a mock bombing, or "die-in," at the

### **RALEIGH PROTESTERS PICKET SENATOR JOHN EDWARDS'S OFFICE**

**Raleigh protesters, more than 250 of them, gather in front of Senator John Edwards's office for a rally on January 21, 2003.**



## THE SOUTH AT WAR



office of presidential-hopeful Senator John Edwards (D) in Raleigh around Martin Luther King, Jr., Day. The North Carolina Peace and Justice Coalition continues to organize peace events and has grown to more than 90 supporting or participating organizations.

Perhaps because of the other Bush connection, protesters in Florida were just as active as those in Texas.

Besides marching with the rest of the world in October and January, hundreds of Floridians transformed the gate of MacDill Air Force Base near Tampa into an anti-war rally every few weeks. Protesters had been cited with resisting arrest at MacDill in May, and the groups kept coming back regularly to make anti-war speeches and picket the base.



All of these actions and many more went off without violence, even in cases where counter-protesters showed up. As of mid-February, seven southern cities had passed resolutions against military action in Iraq. Those included Austin and Atlanta, Gainesville, Key West, Charlottesville, Virginia, Chapel Hill and Carrboro, North Carolina. Birmingham, Alabama, Staunton, Virginia, and Charleston, West Virginia, had introduced resolutions, as had Corpus Christi, Dallas, Galveston, and Houston. Herbert Rothschild was optimistic he would get enough votes from the Houston city council.

Rothschild says people shouldn't get the wrong impres-

sion from low turnouts at protests in the South. If, 40 years ago, you had handed a Southern man a flyer, says Rothschild, he would have recoiled as if you'd handed him a snake.

"People are not as comfortable getting out in the streets in the South as they are in the North and in the West," says Rothschild. "Remember, we were a totalitarian society for much of our history." **SE**

*Hart Matthews is a freelance writer and photographer in Durham, NC., and the author of Pioneer Aviators of the World, to be published by McFarland & Co. in the summer of 2003.*

## ORGANIZING AGAINST WAR: A ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

INTERVIEWS BY RANIA MASRI

**On February 15, 2003, thousands of Southerners joined 10 million people across the globe to voice their opposition to U.S. plans for war on Iraq, in what has been called the largest single protest (or event of any kind) in history. Rania Masri asked Southern anti-war organizers and activists to reflect on February 15 and the peace movement in general.**

### PARTICIPANTS:

**Beth Lavoie (Atlanta, Ga.),** local organizer and assistant director of the Middle East Peace Education Committee of the American Friends Service Committee—Southeast Regional Office (AFSC-SERO).

**Ed Whitfield (Greensboro, N.C.),** co-chair of the Greensboro Peace Coalition, active with the Jubilee Institute and the Beloved Community Center. Helped organize the Raleigh rally and march on Feb. 15.

**Robert Jensen (Austin, Texas),** associate professor of journalism at the University of Texas at Austin, author of *Writing Dissent: Taking Radical Ideas from the Margins to the Mainstream*, member of the *Nowar Collective* and the Southern Voices for Peace Speakers' Bureau. Emceed the anti-war rally in Austin.

**Jim Straub (Richmond, Va.),** a Philadelphian who moved South two years ago. Works on labor, war and poverty issues with the Richmond Coalition for a Living Wage and Food Not Bombs.

**Emily Harry (Richmond, Va.),** a junior at Virginia Commonwealth University, worked with the local Food Not Bombs chapter to organize RECLAIM: A Conference on Community, War, and Oppression, March 21-23.

**Hany Khalil (New York City),** an Arab American organizer, raised in Texas, currently working with the anti-war paper *War Times* ([www.war-times.org](http://www.war-times.org)) and serving as National Coordinator of *Racial Justice 911* ([www.rj911.org](http://www.rj911.org)). Co-chaired the program committee of the United for Peace and Justice rally in New York City on Feb. 15.

**Gregory Reck (Boone, N.C.),** a cultural anthropology professor at Appalachian State University and co-founder of High Country Peace and Justice.

**Michael Berg (Columbia, S.C.),** Mid East Issues Coordinator for the Carolina Peace Resource Center, and local organizer for the Feb. 15 rally.

**SE: Looking back, what were the major achievements of February 15, both nationally and locally?**

**Ed Whitfield:** February 15 moved the anti-war movement firmly into the main stream of activity and participation. It reflects a critical mass of people around the world who cannot be ignored. It reflects the beginning of the broadening and merging of the struggles against war with the struggle against corporate globalization and the struggles around domestic issues of race, class and gender oppression.

**Jim Straub:** The sheer size internationally actually seems to have affected the geopolitical considerations of the warmongers, which is totally amazing. Along with F15, I'd cite some other recent events like the founding of the new Labor Against War coalition, MoveOn's growth, and the pace of municipal antiwar resolutions as all being harbingers of a genuine mass movement.

**SE: What new communities, if any, took part in this protest—either protesting with others, speaking out on the stage, or organizing the protest?**

**Beth Lavoie:** A lot of regular, middle of the road, middle class white folks, both protesting and organizing.

**Jim Straub:** We've had folks like the NAACP and unions involved for the first time, along with an incredibly dynamic local women in black group, Muslim students group, and more. This didn't happen accidentally; activists here have been prioritizing people of color and working-class peoples' involvement from the planning stage, as well as combating the sexism that crops up in antiwar organizing.

**Michael Berg:** We had more Gulf War veterans, student from Benedict and Columbia Colleges as well as anti-abortion conservative Christians morally opposed to the war.

**SE: What problems need to be solved within the movement?**

**Beth Lavoie:** I think the left needs to remember it's not preaching to just the choir now. Tone down the rhetoric. I believe we should definitely keep pointing out connections between the different issues but do it in a language that doesn't completely alienate our newcomers.

**Robert Jensen:** It's no secret that the antiwar movement is still overwhelmingly white and middle-class. One obvious challenge is to create a movement that expands beyond that.

**Jim Straub:** Not enough activists are building relationships with their local unions, living wage coalitions,

## DISCUSSION AMONG SOUTHERN PEACE ACTIVISTS

churches, civic associations and community groups. [There needs to be] more emphasis on local struggles, door-knocking, coalition and relationship building, and generally connecting this movement to the multiracial working class . . . There are fundamental structural reasons this war is happening and if we don't fight for revolutionary change to deal with that we'll be stuck doing harm reduction forever.

**Hany Khalil:** We are far from having built a base in communities of color large and broad enough to impact policy . . . It's urgent that we make a breakthrough in tackling institutional racism's destructive effect within the peace movement . . . We must broaden and deepen our support by targeting a broad range of sectors. That means connecting the war on Iraq to racial and social injustice at home and to US attacks on other Third World nations abroad. We can and must reach far beyond the middle class, white constituency often thought of as the movement's natural base.

**SE:** Does the South play a special role—both in the war itself and in the anti-war movement?

**Beth Lavoie:** Well the South is more conservative and very caught up in the military industrial complex. So as the song goes, "If we can make it here . . ." If the South erupts I think Bush will listen.

**Hany Khalil:** The Southeast and Southwest are home to the military-industrial complex, the petrochemical complex, and the right-wing white base of the Republican party. These are major domestic forces behind the war, making the South the material and ideological base of the U.S. empire. As the percentage of the U.S. population living in the South continues to grow, the importance of this region to national and international politics grows, too. Traditionally, the peace movement has been strongest on the two coasts. It's now clear that without a strong base in the South, we'll never have the power to restrain the U.S. war machine. Developing our own "Southern strategy" must be a high priority.

**SE:** What is needed for this movement to grow and become a more significant force?

**Beth Lavoie:** We need to take this opportunity, with middle of the road types joining up, to debunk the myth that protesting and activism are unpatriotic or foolish meddling and reassert the fact that dissent is essential to democracy and has shaped the history of our nation. In

short—make them activists for good, not just for this anti-war movement.

**Robert Jensen:** At the same time that we try to reach more "regular" people, we also have to push a radical analysis. That is, as we mainstream the movement we shouldn't give up the compelling nature of a radical critique of the U.S. economy, political system, and culture. The power of the movement lies in envisioning and articulating a radically different world.

**Jim Straub:** Every local antiwar movement organizer in the country should be attending union, civil rights, church, civic association, and block club meeting in their city to broaden the base further. And we need a non-sectarian revolutionary pole in the movement, to articulate *why* the US keeps on doing shit like this, in a way ordinary people can evaluate seriously.

**Michael Berg:** In the South, we need to reach out to all the churches. In the South, the key to people's hearts and minds is through the churches.

**SE:** What is your personal source of strength?

**Jim Straub:** The fact that kids with rocks facing down tanks in the Occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip have totally thrown the military planning of the entire New World Order off-balance never ceases to amaze and inspire me. So, I'd have to credit the inspiration of the Palestinian people for keeping me going with all this organizing most days. That and a lot of coffee.

**Emily Harry:** I am compelled to work for justice in all aspects of my life because that is what Jesus did. Jesus' social movement was very much focused on grassroots revolutionary change in the community, and as a believer in Christ, that is where my commitment stays. Revolution in the community is what I'm all about.

**Gregory Reck:** My three little girls and the world they will inherit; my recently deceased mother who was a political radical to the core and who would have been (and maybe somehow is) out in the streets now; my conviction that I can't be silent in a world of injustice and war; my profession as a cultural anthropologist who has lived and done research with rural peoples in Mexico, India, and Appalachia; my repetition of the mantra, "If not me, then who? If not now, then when?"

SE

*Rania Masri is associate editor of Southern Exposure. An expanded version of this conversation can be found at: [www.southernstudies.org](http://www.southernstudies.org).*

# AUSTIN AND “HOMELAND SECURITY, INC.”

Corporate Welfare for a Notorious Defense Contractor  
—from an Anti-War City

STEFAN WRAY

**W**hen you stand in the center of Austin, Texas, on the southern shore of Town Lake and look across the water, you see the valuable riverfront property that lines Cesar Chavez Street. Two new buildings there blend with the look and feel of Austin. There is nothing unusual about this scene.

A closer look at these six-story stone facade structures reveals corporate logos in the upper corners—the initials C-S-C. For most who know what they stand for—Computer Science Corporation—CSC is just another high-tech Austin firm.

Nearly everyone in Austin who pays attention and reads the weekly *Austin Chronicle* will know that in 1999 the city of Austin struck a deal with CSC to encourage it to build downtown rather than out in the greenbelt. And many, whether they like it or not, are aware that city subsidies in its deal with CSC amount to at least \$26 million.

Oddly, though, very few people know that CSC is a leading contractor with the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD). The company has had DOD contracts for the AEGIS weapons system, weapons in space, and ballistic missiles. In 2000, when it occupied its new buildings in Austin, CSC was number 12 in the top 100 list of DOD contractors. Yet a search engine review of more than 200 articles in the *Austin Chronicle* that mention CSC finds no reference to this fact. And in a recent conversation, an aide to Austin's Mayor Pro Tem said it never came up in discussions about the agreement with CSC.

This lack of awareness is about to change, largely because CSC has recently acquired DynCorp, a company deeply involved in military privatization. As reported by Jordan Green in *Southern Exposure* (Spring/ Summer 2002), DynCorp has won contracts to support the U.S. “war on drugs” in Latin America, to service military aircraft in Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, and South Carolina, and to

help maintain the DOD's stockpiles of anthrax and smallpox vaccine.

Along with its strong ties to the defense establishment, DynCorp brings to the merger considerable PR baggage. Most notoriously, DynCorp employees and supervisors have been linked to a child prostitution ring in Bosnia. The company is also the subject of a class action suit brought by farmers in Ecuador who claim that DynCorp's defoliation missions—aimed at coca crops as part of U.S. anti-drug operations—destroyed their agricultural land.

While Austin city leaders and media may have missed the CSC-DOD connection, CSC's merger with DynCorp has not escaped the notice of the national media. When CSC announced that it had filed with the Securities & Exchange Commission its intent to merge with DynCorp in December, 2002, *Wired* magazine published a long feature discussing the implications of the deal.

*Wired* noted that the combination of DynCorp's work in iris and facial recognition technology with CSC's computer technology put the new, fortified company in a good position to cash in on the current national security environment. *Wired* dubbed CSC “Homeland Security, Inc.”

*Washington Technology* called the merger a “perfect match” and reported that CSC, by combining its assets and government contracts with DynCorp, will be a top-10 defense contractor.

But the kicker is that DynCorp, and hence CSC once the merger is finalized by a vote of DynCorp shareholders, was also involved in the U.S. build-up for war with Iraq.

In May, 2000, DynCorp Technical Services, based in Fort Worth, Texas, was awarded a \$180 million 7-year DOD contract for work on the Air Force's Prepositioned War Reserves in the Middle East, according to DynCorp's web site.

For the U.S. Air Force's Prepositioned War Reserve Materiel (WRM) program, DynCorp Technical Services



has provided “support to bare base systems, medical, munitions, fuels mobility support equipment, vehicles, rations, aerospace ground equipment, air base operability equipment, and associated spares and other consumables at designated locations,” also according to DynCorp’s web site.

These designated locations are five U.S. air bases in the region: in Qatar, at the Al Udeid Air Base; in Oman, at Seeb International Airport, Thumrait Air Base, and the island of Masirah; and in Manama, Bahrain.

Most notable is Al Udeid in Qatar, which has served as an important center of U.S. operations against Iraq, especially for the air war. In August, 2002, ABC News reported on commercial satellite images of the Al Udeid base showing that a “state-of-the-art airfield” had been built. Wire services in February, 2003, reported that a number of F-117A stealth bombers had been deployed from the United States to Al-Udeid.

According to GlobalSecurity.org, the F-117A stealth fighter was used very heavily during the first days of Desert Storm (January–February 1991). The F-117A, which normally “packs a payload of two 2,000-pound GBU-27

laser-guided bombs, destroyed and crippled Iraqi electrical power stations, military headquarters, communications sites, air defense operation centers, airfields, ammo bunkers, and chemical, biological and nuclear weapons plants.”

Not only does DynCorp Technical Services have a contract for munitions and re-fueling support at Al-Udeid, DynCorp itself is involved in F-117A pilot training with the 49th Fighter Wing at Holloman Air Force Base in N.M., according to a web site devoted to the F-117A program.

Ironically, perhaps, Austin became one of the first Southern cities to pass a resolution against Bush’s plans to launch a preemptive and unilateral attack on Iraq. Yet now it faces an interesting moral quandary in that it will have long-term contracts with a company engaged in and benefiting financially from Bush’s war on Iraq, and more broadly the administration’s war on terror. A new City Hall is being built directly between the two new CSC buildings. CSC is on city land. *Stefan Wray is a writer and filmmaker based in Austin, Texas.*

SE

### THE U.S. WAR MACHINE: MADE IN TEXAS

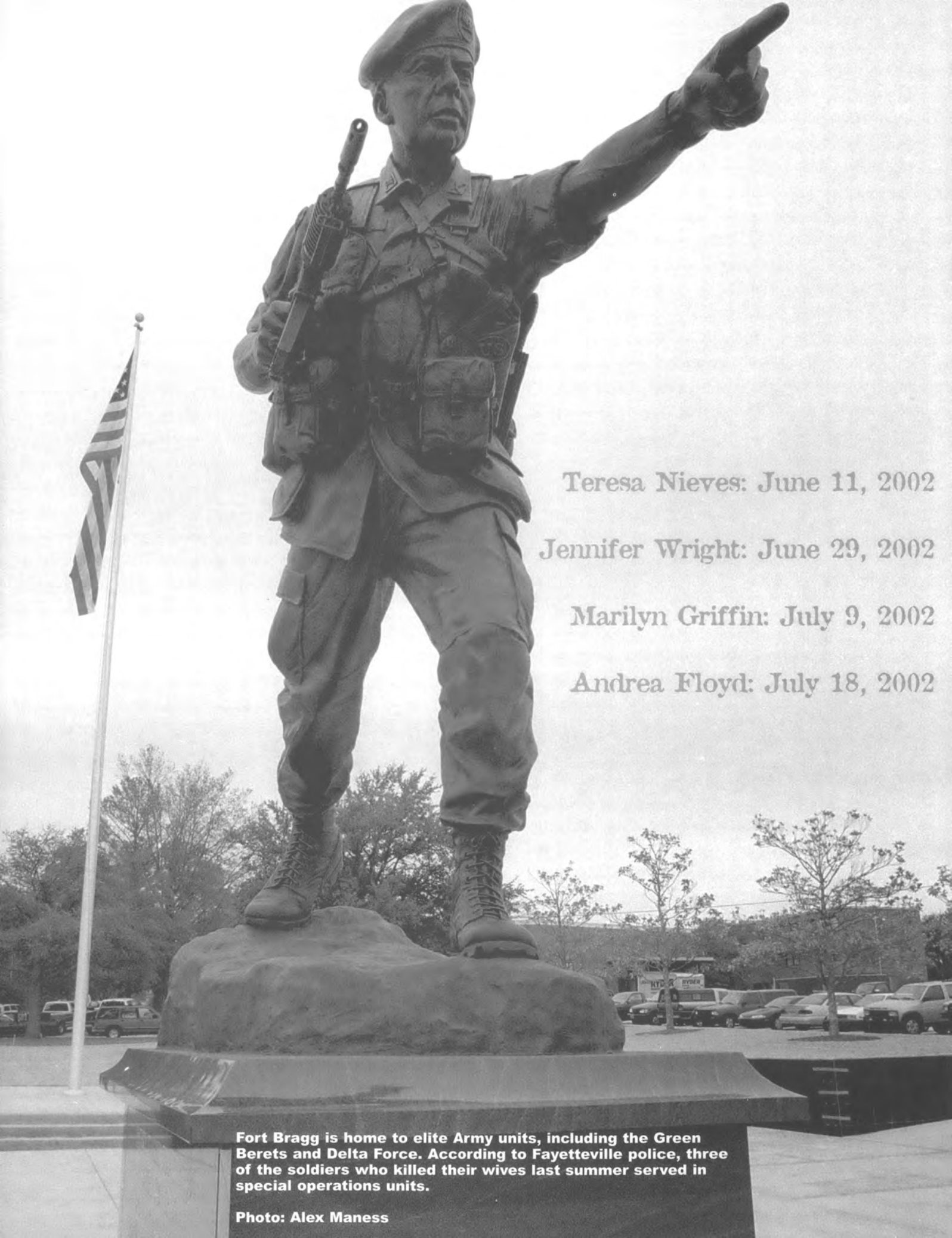
**This story about CSC and Dyncorp is just the tip of the iceberg. As *Southern Exposure* has documented in detail (see Spring/Summer, 2002), Texas is full of weapons contractors. Of the top 100 DOD contractors, 10 are based in Texas and an additional 50 do business in the state. The Joint Strike Fighter contract is being served by Fort Worth’s Lockheed Martin division and Dallas’ Northrop Grumman division. But scores of lesser known DOD projects are scattered throughout Texas, many involving computers and information systems technology. For example, Electronic Data Systems (EDS) out of Plano has a \$6.9 billion contract to develop an Intranet for the Navy. And Dell, based in Austin, has a number of contracts supplying various branches of the military with laptops and other computer hardware.**

**The Made In Texas campaign seeks to draw attention to how Texas corporations and institutions are benefiting from defense contracts in this new war-on-terrorism economy, and how other sectors of the economy are ailing because of it. A Showdown In Texas is planned for May 3, 2003 in Austin, where people from around the state and the nation will gather to demonstrate against Bush’s war on terror and to show the world that even in the heart of Texas there is opposition.**

—Stefan Wray

For more information, go to <http://www.madeintexas.us>

**Protestors posing as “weapons inspectors” in front of a CSC building. Photo courtesy of Stefan Wray.**



Teresa Nieves: June 11, 2002

Jennifer Wright: June 29, 2002

Marilyn Griffin: July 9, 2002

Andrea Floyd: July 18, 2002

**Fort Bragg is home to elite Army units, including the Green Berets and Delta Force. According to Fayetteville police, three of the soldiers who killed their wives last summer served in special operations units.**

**Photo: Alex Maness**

**“Army Accepts Role in 4 Domestic Killings”**

—Raleigh News&amp;Observer, November 8, 2002

# Hidden Casualties

**After a spate of wife killings at Fort Bragg, domestic abuse in military families is under new scrutiny—but the Defense Department still turns a blind eye on key causes.**

**JON ELLISTON AND CATHERINE LUTZ**

**O**ne novel way news reporters have tried to pinpoint the start of major U.S. military engagements is to monitor pizza deliveries at the Pentagon. It's been called the “Domino’s theory”: When the generals and their staffs go into imminent-war mode, they stay at their posts late into the night, and the pizza orders shoot up.

There are more grim indicators that a military operation is nigh. As the war in Afghanistan began in October 2001, for example, “We could literally tell what units were being deployed from where, based on the volume of calls we received from given bases,” says Christine Hansen, executive director of the Connecticut-based Miles Foundation, which has assisted more than 10,000 victims of military-related domestic violence since 1997. The calls were from women who were facing threats and physical abuse from their partners—the same men who were supposedly being deployed on a mission to make America safer. “Then the same thing happened on the other end, when they came back,” Hansen adds.

Hansen and other domestic violence workers say that such patterns of abuse are signs of how issues of gender, power and control are magnified in the military, making domestic violence an even more extensive and complicated problem than it is among civilians. And while recent events have sparked an unprecedented amount of official soul-searching about domestic violence in military families, those key issues have rarely entered the discussion.

It took the rapid-fire deaths of four women to turn national attention to this oft-overlooked form of domestic terror. The problem forced its way into the headlines last July, following a spate of murders by soldiers stationed at Fort Bragg in Fayetteville, North Carolina. In the space of just five weeks, four women married to soldiers were killed by their spouses, according to the authorities. Marilyn Griffin was stabbed 70 times and her trailer set on fire, Teresa Nieves and Andrea Floyd were shot in the head, and Jennifer Wright was strangled. All four couples had children, several now orphaned as two of the

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men shot themselves after killing their wives. The murders garnered wide attention because they were clustered over such a short period, and because three of the soldiers had served in special operations units that fought in Afghanistan. (The throat-slitting murder of Shalamar Franceschi a few months before by her husband, a just-released Fort Bragg soldier, might also have been added to the tally, but wasn't.)

The murders have raised a host of questions—about the effects of war on the people who wage it, the spillover on civilians from training military personnel to kill, the role of military institutional values, and even the possible psychiatric side effects of an anti-malarial drug the Army gives its soldiers. On the epidemic of violence against women throughout the United States and on the role of gender in both military and civilian domestic violence, however, there has been a deafening silence.

### ANOTHER KIND OF CASUALTY

In the wake of the domestic murders, defense officials have focused on “marital discord” and “family stress,” and have fiercely contested the notion that domestic violence is a more severe problem in the military than in civilian popula-

tions, although the Pentagon has not invested much in finding out what the comparison would look like. One Army-funded study, however, found in 1998 that reports of “severe aggression” against spouses ran more than three times higher among Army families than among civilian ones.

The military nonetheless maintains that violence against spouses is no more prevalent in the armed forces, arguing that it uses different criteria than civilian authorities for identifying domestic violence, including severe verbal abuse. “People have been throwing some wild figures around,” says Lt. Col. James Cassella, a Defense Department spokesman. “My understanding is that it’s kind of an apples and oranges comparison.” But the military’s method may actually underestimate the problem, since it ignores violence against a legion of non-married partners, an especially important omission, considering that one recent study found that single men represent nearly 60 percent of soldiers using a gun or knife in attacks on women. And there is no way to independently corroborate the figures the military releases on domestic violence cases that are handled through military judicial processes, since they are shielded, as civilian police records are not, from public view. The cited studies did attempt to control, however, for the most important demographic differences—the apples and oranges—in military and civilian populations.

Mary Beth Loucks-Sorrell, interim director of the North Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence, a state-wide umbrella group based in Durham, is convinced that women partnered with soldiers face disproportionate risks of domestic abuse, a conclusion reached through years of fielding reports from abused women (and occasionally men). Reports from military communities are not only more frequent but the level of violence they describe is more extreme, she says. Some soldiers also terrorize their partners in unique ways, reminding the women of the sniper and bare-handed killing skills they acquire in training. Her anecdotal accounts are backed up by studies that found military men are more likely to use weapons than are civilians, and more likely to strangle their wives until unconscious.

On hearing of the four murders, many people in the general public and media asked whether the soldiers might have suffered from post-combat trauma or simply, as the military suggested, from the stress of deployment and its

disruption of family life. Some commentators on the right went so far as to suggest these killings are another kind of war casualty and give us one more reminder of how much soldiers suffer on behalf of the national interest. On the left, the combat stress explanation can draw on the notion of the soldier as a victim of class violence and reluctant imperial tool. In both these views, the soldier's home front violence is the traumatic outcome of "what he saw" in combat, rather than the much more significant trauma of what he did—and indeed, what he is trained to do.

Stan Goff, a veteran of several special operations units who today is a militant democracy activist in Raleigh, scoffs at the "TV docudrama version of war" underlying this view. "Go to Afghanistan," he says, "where you are insulated from outside scrutiny and all the taboos you learned as a child are suspended. You take life more and more with impunity, and discover that the universe doesn't collapse when you drop the hammer on a human being, and for some, there is a real sense of power. For others, for all maybe, it's PTSD [post-traumatic stress disorder] on the installment plan."

A distracting side show to the murder investigations has been a UPI report suggesting the soldiers might have suffered side effects of Lariam, a drug the Army gives prophylactically to all troops going to malarial areas. Prescribed to 22 million people since 1985, Lariam is known to have neuropsychiatric effects in a tiny percentage of cases, found in one large study to be 1 in 13,000. In the wake of Pentagon stonewalling on the health effects of anthrax inoculation and depleted uranium weapons, Defense Department denials that Lariam is a problem might justifiably be taken with a grain of salt, but the epidemiological numbers suggest the Defense Department is probably right in this case. An Army epidemiological team, discussed in greater length below, concluded after an in-depth investigation at Fort Bragg that Lariam had been given to only two of the soldiers, and "was unlikely to be the cause of the tragic clustering of domestic violence incidents."

Some of the more likely causes of military-related home violence have received far less attention. In the Pentagon's approach to the problem and in virtually all media accounts, gender has been left hidden in plain sight. As in the 1990s schoolyard shootings, where a rhetoric of "kids killing kids" disguised the fact that boys were overwhelmingly the killers, here the soldiers are seen

**One Army-funded study found in 1998 that reports of "severe" aggression" against spouses ran more than three times higher among Army families than among civilian ones.**

simply as an occupational group and the problem, at most, as one of an institutional culture where soldiers have difficulty "asking for help" from family service providers abundantly available on installations like Bragg.

#### HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT

Not only does the military remain by reputation the most "masculine" occupation available, but people in Fayetteville, and in the armed forces generally, consider Special Forces and Delta Force, where three of the four men worked, the Army's toughest units. Special operations units are some of the last in the military to exclude women, and they also specialize in unconventional warfare, which is combat that often follows neither the letter nor the spirit of the rules of war. As a sign in a Special Forces training area says: "Rule #1. There are no rules. Rule #2. Follow Rule #1." Such a macho, above-the-law culture may provide not a small part of the recipe for domestic violence. Combine this with a double standard of sexuality, one in which, as many soldiers and their wives told us, infidelity is to be expected on Special Forces deployments—where the men operate with unusual autonomy and are often surrounded by desperately poor women—whereas the infidelity of wives, reactive or not, real or imagined, gets punished with violence.

If there was a common thread that tied the murdered women's lives together, it was the one identified by Christina DeNardo, a *Fayetteville Observer* reporter: All four of them, DeNardo reported, had expressed a desire to leave their marriages, a situation that domestic violence workers have identified as the most dangerous time for women in abusive relationships. That is when the control these men tend to insist on in their relationships appears about to dissolve. Christine Hansen, of the Miles

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Foundation, says that military personnel are controlled from above at work more than most U.S. workers, and many come home looking to reassert control, often with violence. The anxieties about control, and consequently the violence, flare up most before and after military deployments, Hansen says, as soldiers lose and then try to reinstate control. That's why her foundation got a spike in calls before and after the Afghanistan deployments.

The Pentagon says it is waging a determined campaign to curtail risks to military spouses and non-married partners. In a widely disseminated directive issued in November 2001, Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz declared that "domestic violence is an offense against the institutional values of the military." But some analysts have countered that domestic violence, rape, and male

supremacism itself are not anomalies or sideshows to war; instead, they lie near the center of how it is prosecuted and narrated. Like gender and control issues, military culture's institutionalized promotion of violence, and its effect on life at home, has gone unaddressed by the military brass.

When the subject of how military service might promote violence against women is raised, it proves to be a touchy one. In 1996, Madeline Morris, a Duke University law professor who specializes in war crimes issues and served as a consultant for Clinton administration Secretary of the Army Togo West, argued in the *Duke Law Journal* that "the norms currently prevalent within military organizations include a configuration of norms regarding masculinity, sexuality and women that have been found to be conducive to rape." Those norms, she wrote, include "elements of hypermasculinity, adversarial sexual beliefs, promiscuity, rape myth acceptance, hostility toward women, and possibly also acceptance of violence against women." Morris's thesis, which was bolstered by a good deal of military and academic research, was hotly contested by conservative commentators, but it launched little actual dialogue about the potential ties between military values and domestic violence.

Morris is not quite a lone voice in the wilderness. A few rare reporters and commentators have pointed out the obvious social costs of training millions of men to kill. "There's nothing to equal the military as the incubator of violence," Alexander Cockburn argued in a *New York Press* column after the Fort Bragg murders. He placed the killings in the context of the war against terrorism, in particular a Special Forces search and destroy mission that left dozens of Afghan civilian noncombatants dead, wounded, and roughed up. "The villagers of Hajibirgit paid the price," he wrote. "The four murdered women in Fort Bragg paid another installment, and the payments in terms of rage, drunkenness, drug addiction and antisocial behavior will be exacted month after month for years to come, amid the resolute determination of the press *not* to connect up the dots."

### DOWNPLAYING THE VIOLENCE

"Army accepts role in 4 domestic killings," read a headline in the *Raleigh News and Observer* on Nov. 8, 2002, when the Pentagon concluded a special investigation that was supposed to connect the dots. In the face of intense questioning about how they would account for the cluster

of killings and seek to ward off such tragedies in the future, Defense Department officials dispatched a 19-member epidemiological team to Fort Bragg to get to the bottom of it all. Staffing the team were behavioral specialists from the Army and the Centers for Disease Control.

In addition to finding that the drug Lariam was probably not a determining factor, the team's investigative report concluded that "marital discord," and family problems exacerbated by the stress of deployment, were the main aggravating factors. The report, Hansen says, "diminishes the violence these women suffer" by failing to pay much attention to victims and their search for security. It likewise fails to look at the factors that make military women especially vulnerable to abuse, which include their financial insecurity as individuals, their geographical and social isolation from family and friends, and, most importantly, their living cheek by jowl with men trained in extreme violence and in the idea of their superiority as men and as soldiers.

The special investigation was just the latest in a long line of commissions established over the course of the many gendered military scandals of the last 15 years, from Tailhook to Aberdeen to the dozens of women cadets raped at the Air Force Academy. Such investigations have neither stemmed the problem nor prompted the military to recognize the fundamental role of gender in crimes like the Fort Bragg killings. This would entail seeing the murders as a piece of the larger, epidemic problem of violent abuse by men within the military, including rape of female (and some male) soldiers and civilians, lesbian and gay bashing, and brutal hazing rituals.

And it would also require much greater involvement and investment in protecting military families. A relatively new Army program provides \$900 a month plus health care for the few abused women whose husbands are removed from the force for domestic violence. But Fort Bragg has no domestic violence shelter, though for many years the base was donating a paltry \$10 a day to a local shelter when military wives fled there. Tellingly, both enforcement of domestic violence laws and information about such proceedings appear to be woefully inadequate. When domestic violence is confirmed by military authorities, case review committees staffed by officers often recommend such meager "punishments" as anger management or stress reduction courses, or treatment for alcohol abuse. Even severe felony assaults often result in non-judicial sanctions

**Some military chaplains have advised women that suffering is their lot or that their husbands were just "working off some excess energy" through violence.**

such as demotion or extra work assignments. Of the 1,213 reported domestic violence incidents known to military police and judged to merit disciplinary action in 2000, the military could report only 29 where the perpetrator was court-martialed or sent to a civilian court for prosecution. The military claims to have no data on the disciplinary outcome of the much larger number of domestic incidents—12,068—reported to family services in that year. They also have no record of the outcome of 81 percent of the police cases.

This poor record-keeping and apparent reluctance to prosecute offenders can be explained in part by the military's institutional interests in burying certain potentially controversial aspects of its domestic violence problem. The first is public relations. To recruit and retain a 1.4 million-person force, including women and married men, remains a monumental task that would only be made harder by widespread knowledge of the extent of the violence. Second, there are financial motives. Each soldier costs more than a hundred thousand dollars to recruit and train, money that goes down the drain if a soldier is discharged or imprisoned. Finally, there is the continuing, if waning, power of a belief, still widespread in the pre-volunteer and mostly unmarried force, that "If the army had wanted you to have a wife, it would have issued you one." Protecting women from domestic violence in this environment falls even farther down the list of missions to be accomplished than it does in the civilian sector.

#### **AFTERMATH**

In the aftermath of the tragic string of murders, some attitude and policy shifts have buoyed the hopes of battered women in Fayetteville. Some women who have been trying

**One woman whose husband worked at Fort Bragg with one of the killers reported that his unit had great sympathy for him. "They were all convinced that he was the victim," the woman said, "that she [the murdered wife] started it all."**

to get help for years noted there were some at least temporary changes made on post in the wake of the killings, including a greater urgency about sending women to court in town to get protective orders. And both before and since the murders, many women have successfully left their abusive husbands. One of them described how, for the ten years of their marriage, her husband had controlled her through constant belittlement, forbidding her to drive or have a job, and ultimately, through rape and other violence. "I have a lot of hope now," she said. "The people at the Care Center [the domestic violence shelter] were a godsend, and the victim's assistant at the sheriff's department. Those are strong women, and I said, 'I want to be like that.' So now I have a job, I go to school, I'm on the Dean's List."

A few women, their identities protected, testified before a special congressional panel that came to Fayetteville in the fall of 2002. They hold out some hope that through some allies in Congress, and with more of the type of media coverage that stirs national attention—like a special show that Oprah Winfrey recently did on military domestic violence—civilian laws and policing practices, at least, will be forced to change. This, they hope, can mitigate future violence, particularly since the military, when it does anything, passes most cases on to the civilian courts.

In other ways, however, life in Fayetteville goes on as usual in the months since the murders. Women married to abusive soldiers have been calling the Fayetteville newspaper and domestic violence shelters around the country in sharply higher numbers since the Fort Bragg killings were reported. They have spoken out about the frequent failure

of commanders to take their calls for help seriously. And they have complained that they were often sent to military chaplains, some of whom advised them that suffering is a woman's lot or that their husbands were just "working off some excess energy" through violence. One counselor employed at Fort Bragg was quoted in the *Washington Post* describing how she tells women to prepare their partners returning from deployment for changes they have made in his absence, like cutting their hair short: "He might be thinking about running his hands through that long, luxuriant hair," she said. "Don't surprise your husband."

The difficulties women have in leaving their abusers are well known. Military wives have additional disincentives. The unemployment rate for military wives is extremely high—hovering around 20 percent for those living at Fort Bragg—and those who do find employment are often stuck in the minimum wage retail jobs that are the main work available in the satellite economy around most large posts. (That economy, it should be noted, is suffering from even higher unemployment rates in the current recession, a problem exacerbated by the deployments for the Bush administration's war with Iraq. And the recession has also sapped the budgets of many domestic violence shelter and service providers throughout the South.) If military wives report abuse, they risk not only retribution from their husbands, as do women in the civilian world, but loss of their total family income, health care and other benefits, and even their housing and neighbors if their husband is discharged.

The local domestic violence shelter continues to take in the refugee women and children who come to its door. One of the first shelters to be established in North Carolina by a group of feminists, prominently including some wives of soldiers, the Care Center struggles to keep its head above water, particularly given the torrent of people sent there for anger management classes by the courts in lieu of jail time. Virtually every weekday night, from two to four dozen people come for the multi-hour sessions, similar versions of which are also run on post.

The legal system, too, slogs through a high enough volume of cases that there are special domestic violence court sessions each week at the Cumberland County Courthouse. While a number of progressive people work there, including Judge Elizabeth Keever and a victim's assistance worker, Norma Hall, who accompanies some women through the system, they, too, are overwhelmed with



numbers. Some judges still remain disturbingly ambivalent about the seriousness of the problem. One woman described the difficult experience of convincing herself to bring her hospital records, photographs, and other documentation of abuse to court, only to be told by the judge that he was not going to hear her or any of the other 50 domestic violence cases that day. Instead, she and the other women were herded into another room to sign a paper indicating the abuser would plead guilty in exchange for the requirement to take anger management classes, and for waiving their right to a hearing before the judge or a trial.

In other quarters around town, there is defiance or denial. One woman whose husband worked at Fort Bragg with one of the killers reported that his unit had great sympathy for him. "They were all convinced that he was the victim," the woman said, "that she [the murdered wife] started it all." And the Fayetteville business community has responded after reeling from the months of intense media scrutiny—much of it superficially glancing at the city's main drag of strip joints and tattoo parlors and dismissing the vibrant community beyond them. A recently established booster organization, FYI Fayetteville, will have a "rapid response team" to immediately contest and counteract negative publicity about the city by calling media outlets and arguing the community's attributes.

The people in Fayetteville most affected by these recent events are, of course, the hundreds of battered women still living in daily fear of their partners or ex-partners. Surprisingly, their stories often focus less on the violence itself (though some continue to live with scars, neurological damage, and other permanent signs of their abuse) than on the failures of the Army and others in the community to help them when they sought rescue. Other women noted the stark contrast of the severity with which the military judicial system deals with soldiers who attack and injure other soldiers of equal rank. These women's main refrain, repeated over and over again: "He was never held accountable for what he did to me."

#### "WITH US OR AGAINST US"

The celebration of soldiers over the last several decades, grown more fervent since the war on terror began, has hampered attempts to address the problem by further elevating violent masculinity to a place of honor in the culture. In good times, critical views of military practice are not well received; in the intimidating, "with us or against

**The idea that the soldier makes an unrecompensable sacrifice creates a halo effect, so that the murderers are painted as victims of the horrors of combat, while scant attention is paid to the women they killed or the failures of the system to protect them.**

us" atmosphere fostered by the Bush administration since 9/11, they may be considered tantamount to treason. Hansen, who has received death threats since her foundation appeared in news stories about the murders, notes that some civilian judges have been even more reluctant than before to convict soldiers of domestic violence, when doing so would trigger the Lautenberg amendment, a 1996 law that prohibits convicted abusers from owning firearms.

Wartime, it appears, is the hardest time to take stock of the real causes of military-related domestic violence. The idea that the soldier makes an unrecompensable sacrifice creates a halo effect, so that the murderers are painted as victims of the horrors of combat, while scant attention is paid to the women they killed or the failures of the system to protect them. As Stan Goff, the special operations veteran, told us, soldiers living in this climate can turn to their wives and say, "The culture's worshiping me. Why aren't you?" While they may have provided a wake-up call of sorts, the Fort Bragg murders, and the official response to them, have resulted in little that will change the situation of militarism's hidden casualties: The thousands of women who live in fear—in wartime and peacetime—and struggle each day, as Hansen says, "trying to provide for the safety of themselves and their children." **SE**

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# THE POWELL MANIFESTO

## How A Virginia Lawyer's "Attack" Memo Changed America

JERRY M. LANDAY

**F**or more than two decades, from the start of the Reagan presidency in 1980, the radical right has waged a brilliant campaign under the banner of "neoconservatism" to seal its grip on the organs of

power: from the White House to Capitol Hill, from the highest law courts to law schools, from the largest corporations to the denizens of inherited wealth, from editorial pages to television tubes. Under the rubric of "getting government off our backs" the movement has waged a cultural and political war to overturn the social policies of Roosevelt, Truman, Kennedy, and Johnson, and denigrate the liberal label as a pejorative. It has used government to funnel wanton giveaways to the privileged and powerful. Neoconservatives have built a well-paid, tightly integrated activist network of hundreds of tax-exempt think tanks, policy research institutes, litigation centers, agitprop spin operations, and publishing houses. An army of scholars, writers, columnists, and political consultants has exploited ideology as a lucrative career tool. So-called watchdog operations have pressured mainstream media to hire far-right writers, editors, talk-show hosts, and pundits. To maintain power, self-proclaimed Constitutionalists wage a counter-revolution against Constitutional principle: free speech, individual rights, and separation of church and state.

Movement conservatism has become the government that runs the government. It raised George Bush to power, sets his priorities, drafts his action programs, domestic and foreign, serves as his personnel agency, and vets his judicial nominees. Yet few are aware of its existence.

The threads of this integrated fabric reach back to the angry remnants of Barry Goldwater's losing presidential campaign in 1964 and to the disruptive racist presidential campaigns of Alabama Governor George Wallace, the rightward swing of such disillusioned far-left political theorists as Irving Kristol, the rise of TV charismatics such as Pat Robertson and William Buckley, and financier



Lewis Powell. Photo courtesy of Jerry M. Landay.

William E. Simon's mobilization of ultraconservative wealth to fund the movement.

One of the most remarkable influences on the rise of the radical right was made by a still unrecognized contributor—an illustrious legal mind from Richmond, Virginia, who would gain a national reputation for moderation and civility as associate justice of the U.S. Supreme Court. Yet, in 1972, just months before President Richard Nixon nominated him, Lewis E. Powell, Jr., authored an act of sheer political zealotry, a harshly radical action program to save capitalism from what he saw as the social excesses of the 1960s and early 1970s.

This influential memorandum would have historic consequences. The radical right came to embrace it as a political manifesto, a blueprint for organization and political action. It fired the business community to reverse its post-Depression flight from politics, and marshal its might and money behind

president of the American Bar Association. His ardor for the free-enterprise system in general, and its corporate expression in particular, were consistent with his successful career in corporate law, membership on the board of 11 corporations, and his origins in the root-and-branch conservatism of southern aristocracy. But Powell remained open to some lessons that his life experience was to offer. He once gave personal counsel to a Richmond office associate whose pregnant girlfriend died of a self-induced abortion. Powell also accepted the need to address the social wreckage of slavery. When the Supreme Court desegregated public schools in 1954, Powell was chairman of Richmond's school board. He rejected Governor Almond's policy of "massive resistance," over the objection of influential whites. The city's schools remained open, averting the chaos that rocked other parts of the south.

But Powell vehemently defended the interests of his

**POWELL AUTHORED AN ACT OF SHEER POLITICAL ZEALOTRY, A HARSHLY RADICAL ACTION PROGRAM TO SAVE CAPITALISM FROM WHAT HE SAW AS THE SOCIAL EXCESSES OF THE 1960S AND EARLY 1970S.**

the Republican Party, now neoconservatism's political shell.

In his subsequent judicial career, history portrays Lewis Powell as a consensus builder between the polarized ideologues of the high court, a conciliator between right and left. His reasoned embrace of racial diversity through affirmative action in university admissions and abortion as a woman's Constitutional right shaped the consensus for two of the court's landmark decisions. Yet, ironically, those precedents have become prime targets for obliteration by the radical-right movement he helped motivate. The court's conservative majority could soon reverse both precedents.

### THE RISE OF LEWIS POWELL

Powell earned his law degree at Washington and Lee University in Lexington, Va. He was a southern Democrat of conservative hue, and had achieved prominence as

corporate clients in the turbulent '60s and '70s. He was appalled by the anti-business fervor of the country. Liberal critics denounced the power of big business, especially its trend toward corporate gigantism and conglomeration. Big was *not* beautiful, they argued, but dangerous, and had to be regulated. Powell countered that the free market was self-correcting, and that business ought to be left alone. What corporations needed was not *more* federal control but *less*. He opposed any reforms that impinged on corporate freedom.

The Powell archive at Washington and Lee offers researchers a look at how Powell viewed those turbulent times. In September, 1971, a month before President Nixon was to nominate him to the Supreme Court to fill the seat vacated by Hugo Black, Powell had read and starkly underlined an article in the Richmond *Times-Dispatch* by John Chamberlain. It detailed some of the

### **INFLUENTIAL BUSINESS LEADERS TOOK UP POWELL'S RECOMMENDATIONS AS ORGANIZING PRINCIPLES TO REVERSE THE GAINS OF LIBERALISM, USING NAKED POWER, HARD-NOSED PARTISANSHIP, CULTURAL PRESSURE, AND LITIGATION.**

trends that alarmed him: a purported, pro-liberal tilt by television news, the Vietnam war, "the kids," "racism, the black militants, and the WASPS." The trouble lay with a "liberal ethos," Chamberlain complained, that was leading America astray.

It was an age of youth-driven populism. Young rebels had stirred campus unrest against the Vietnam war. They awakened public opinion to the soaring social costs of the corporation-driven economic system—environmental degradation, air and water pollution, joblessness, and race-based neglect of the poor. Powell rejected all that, finding fault instead with the perceived liberalism of commercial television and universities—power that had to be blunted.

Another bete noire was reformer Ralph Nader and his "Raiders." Powell had filed away a lengthy profile from *Fortune* magazine of May, 1971, entitled "The Passion that Rules Ralph Nader." The article itemized the legislative accomplishments of the consumer movement for which Nader was standard-bearer: "imposing new federal safety standards on automobiles, meat and poultry products, gas pipelines, coal mining, and radiation emissions from electronic devices." Nader's movement had "invigorated" the Federal Trade Commission and the Food and Drug Administration. Nader's book exposing the poor design of American cars, *Unsafe at Any Speed*, had led to a significant drop-off in auto deaths. But Powell had underlined these words: "The passion that rules in him [Nader]—and he is a passionate man—is aimed at smashing utterly the target of his hatred, which is corporate power." Worst of all, Nader had gained Presidential potential, threatening to "sweep away the shattered market system" with "eccentric" ideas.

#### **THE "ATTACK" MEMORANDUM**

Powell was convinced that this anti-business counter-revolt had to be turned back. He met with his Richmond friend

Eugene Sydnor, Jr., a Richmond friend and department store owner, who was also chairman of the education committee of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce in Washington. For Sydnor and the Chamber, Powell agreed to write a memorandum proposing a national campaign of "education" to encourage "a more balanced view of the country's economic system." Leaders of the Chamber were enthusiastic, and agreed to circulate the full text to members. It was less a program of education than a militant manifesto of political action. The memorandum was distributed nationally in the Chamber's periodical *Washington Report*, dated August 31, 1971, which went to influential business leaders and managers. Some would do more than simply read it. They would take up Powell's recommendations as organizing principles to reverse the gains of liberalism, using naked power, hard-nosed partisanship, cultural pressure, and litigation.

The document bore the headline: "ATTACK ON AMERICAN FREE ENTERPRISE SYSTEM," and the stamp "THE POWELL MEMORANDUM." It ran to eight pages, and was packaged as "CONFIDENTIAL." "The American economic system is under broad attack," the manifesto began. The assault was "gaining momentum and converts" in centers of influence—"perfectly respectable elements of society who shaped opinion: from the college campus, the pulpit, the media, the intellectual community . . . and from politicians."

Powell's language was baldly militant. American business had to use "confrontational politics," had "to stop suffering in impotent silence" and "launch a counter-attack . . . to penalize politically those who oppose [the system]." Powell emphasized the financial leverage that business interests held over universities, media, churches, and, through commercial sponsorship, television. The threat of de-funding, Powell implied, could be used to achieve

**“THE AMERICAN ECONOMIC SYSTEM IS UNDER BROAD ATTACK,” WROTE POWELL, “FROM THE COLLEGE CAMPUS, THE PULPIT, THE MEDIA, THE INTELLECTUAL COMMUNITY, AND POLITICIANS.”**

“balanced” re-education. What he detailed was neither balanced nor nuanced. It was an assault on academic freedom and Constitutional rights.

The time had come, Powell wrote, “indeed, it is long overdue—for the wisdom, ingenuity and resources of American business to be marshaled against those who would destroy it.” Powell outlined four broad areas of attack: higher education, especially students and faculties in the social sciences; the media; the political establishment—where public opinion, public policies, legislation, and agendas were shaped—and the court system.

1. *Academe*: on campuses, liberal professors were wielding “enormous influence far out of proportion to their numbers,” radicalizing their students “to the point of being revolutionaries.” He called for the shaping of counter-cultural think tanks, with staffs of scholars, lecturers, public speakers, and speakers’ bureaus. The scholars would “evaluate social science textbooks” to assure “fair and factual treatment of our system.” Authors and publishers would submit textbooks for “review and critique.” Pressures would be applied to “administrators and boards of trustees” to correct the “imbalance” of faculties that were deemed too liberal. This scholarly elite would “do the thinking, the analysis, the writing and the speaking.” It would insist that conservatives be heard.

2. *Television and other media*: This hired elite, “thoroughly familiar with the media,” would also shape public opinion. Its members would monitor whole television networks, not simply the daily “news analysis,” with its “insidious criticism of the enterprise system,” censoring (though he never used the word) such documentaries as CBS-News’ *The Selling of the Pentagon*, which had documented the waste of taxpayer dollars by the military establishment on spectacular war games to promote the Vietnamese war. Businesses would also sponsor vigorous advertising campaigns to promote the

so-called free-market system.

3. *Politics*: The American businessman, “truly the forgotten man,” had lost his influence within the government. Presidential candidates were daring to express “anti-business views.” Lawmakers were being “stampeded” to embrace the liberal agendas of consumerists and environmentalists. Business had to take “direct” steps to find its voice and use it “aggressively” and “without embarrassment.” That included broadening the “role of lobbyist for the business point of view.”

4. *The court system*: Powell also prefigured today’s active, radical-right litigation network, observing that “the judiciary may be the most important instrument for social, economic, and political change.” He made a stunning recommendation—to place more ideologically friendly judges on the bench, a strategy that would prove especially compelling to movement conservatives (if not to champions of juridical dispassion and independence). A “highly competent staff of” pro-business litigators, copying the methods of the ACLU, would “initiate or intervene in scores of cases each year.” Changes in policy that could not readily be achieved by legislative or bureaucratic means might more easily be won in court.

The manifesto ended apocalyptically: “Business and the enterprise system are in deep trouble, and the hour is late.” In October 1971, President Nixon nominated Powell to the high court, where he traded in political zealotry for the reserved lamina of juridical dispassion whose demolition his manifesto had just urged.

## A MANIFESTO IN ACTION

In September 1972, months after the Senate had confirmed him, Powell’s “confidential” memo was leaked to Jack Anderson, the liberal columnist, who complained

**AMERICAN BUSINESS, SAID POWELL, HAD “TO STOP SUFFERING IN IMPOTENT SILENCE” AND “LAUNCH A COUNTER-ATTACK . . . TO PENALIZE POLITICALLY THOSE WHO OPPOSE [THE SYSTEM].”**

that the memo raised serious jurisprudential questions about the new Justice's legal objectivity and “fitness.” He noted that no senator had questioned him about it during the confirmation hearings, because investigators had failed to bring it to senators' attention. The conservative columnist James J. Kilpatrick fired back that Anderson's pieces gave the document “publicity” it could never have otherwise received. Businessmen were besieging the Chamber with requests for copies. The authoritarian overtones of the *cri de coeur* Powell had left behind reverberated through the gilt and marble porticos of the American conservative establishment.

In his book *The Power of Ideas*, Lee Edwards, the official historian of the Heritage Foundation, one of the right's most influential think tanks, credits the Powell manifesto with “stirring up” and convincing the late Joseph Coors, head of the largest brewery west of the Mississippi, that American business was “ignoring a crisis.” Coors was moved to “invest” \$250,000 in 1972 to establish the Analysis and Research Association (ARA) in Washington, D.C., the original name of the Heritage Foundation. Other wealthy contributors followed.

Heritage's aim was to overwhelm liberal power in Washington, by aggressively devising and marketing policies and legislative proposals to promote the conservative agenda. Heritage has remained a major Coors beneficiary, and has been cloned into scores of think tanks, policy institutes and lobbying operations that today constitute the radical-right apparatus.

Conservative foundations faithfully and consistently underwrite scores of institutes and policy centers on a longterm basis that operate along the lines proposed by Powell's memo. These agitprop operations include the Federalist Society, the Manhattan Institute, the Cato Institute, Citizens for a Sound Economy, the National

Association of Scholars and Accuracy in Academe, Brent Bozell's Media Research Center, and Reed Irvine's Accuracy in Media. In the past year and a half, senior fellows of the right-radical American Enterprise Institute and the Project for the New American Century have spearheaded the Administration's drive for war in Iraq and promoted the arguments for Bush's grandiose expansion of American empire.

In her recent book *Slanting the Story*, journalist-critic Trudy Lieberman cited the potency of the Powell manifesto's attack against Ralph Nader's consumer movement. As a result of such concerted assaults, the right wing was “well on its way” to victory in the “broad philosophical argument” between liberals and conservatives. In its 1993 paper *Justice for Sale*, the Alliance for Justice detailed how Powell's legal recommendations inspired “a multi-faceted, comprehensive, and integrated campaign” coordinated and funded by large corporations and right-wing foundations “to create taxpayer subsidized law firms . . . to rewrite American jurisprudence . . . advanc[e] their agenda before judges, lawyers, legal scholars, and government policy makers . . . [and] control “the future direction of the law” by installing ideologically friendly law faculties. They rewarded promising law students with scholarships and clerkships under conservative judges, and promoted conservatives to fill those judgeships.

The Pacific Legal Foundation, promoted by the California Chamber of Commerce in 1973, became the first of eight such regional litigation centers. J. Simon Fluor, founder of a global engineering company, provided the seed money. The Olin, Scaife, Bradley, Smith Richardson, and Castle Rock foundations, among others, continue to underwrite these operations. They have wrought great changes in the law at the Supreme Court level—such as weakening affirmative action programs,

**MOVEMENT CONSERVATISM HAS WROUGHT GREAT CHANGES AT THE SUPREME COURT LEVEL—WEAKENING AFFIRMATIVE ACTION PROGRAMS, LIMITING ACCESS TO COURT REVIEWS BY DEATH-ROW PRISONERS, AND RESTRICTING THE LEGAL RIGHTS OF THE HANDICAPPED, MINORITIES, AND THE ELDERLY.**

limiting access to court reviews by death-row prisoners, and restricting the legal rights of the handicapped, minorities, and the elderly. They have won decisions in Federal courtrooms against the public domain that curb women's rights, weaken the separation of church and state, and emasculate clean air and water regulations.

**DUBIOUS HERITAGE FOR A CONSIDERED MODERATE**

History has overlooked Powell's brief incarnation as an ideological radical. He is seen, rather, as a jurisprudential moderate, in the tradition of Holmes and Brandeis. On the Supreme Court from 1972 to 1987, Powell proved a disappointment to President Nixon, who had hoped that his presence would help drive the bench rightward toward "strict construction," a code word for opposition to racial progress. A former law clerk described him as "too liberal to please the conservatives, and too conservative to please the liberals." He revisited his views on a number of important cases. In a 1977 decision defining the line between church and state, he voted with the conservative bloc to uphold an Ohio law sanctioning state aid to parochial schools. Powell reasoned that "the risk of continuing political strife" on the issue was "remote." But he reversed himself eight years later, providing the fifth vote to strike down parochial aid programs in New York City and Grand Rapids, Michigan. He explained that the "potential for such divisiveness" had grown "strong."

In the mid-1980s, Powell voted with conservatives to uphold the death penalty, despite hard evidence that its application was all too often influenced by race. But in 1991, no longer on the court, he shifted again, on reflection telling his biographer: "I have come to think that capital punish-

ment should be abolished" because it "brings discredit on the whole legal system" and "cannot be enforced fairly." At the end of his career, Powell conceded that he remained "troubled to this day" by his vote to uphold Georgia's anti-gay sodomy law.

Powell died in 1998. Were he alive to reflect on today's corporate scandals, Wall Street avarice, the fanatical fervor of radical conservatism, the ever-widening gulf between rich and poor, and the relentless march to war, would he have questioned his motives in promoting the 1971 "attack" manifesto? His principal biographer never mentioned it. His moderation on the bench certainly surprised many. But would it have led him to reconsider and, perhaps, repudiate the memorandum written in the white heat of a stormy historical moment? Might Powell have conceded on reflection that he'd been wrong, and that Nader and his Raiders were right—that corporate business has grown much too powerful for the public good? On these matters, Justice Powell was not accorded the benefit of hindsight. **SE**

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# APPALACHIAN COLORS

REVOLUTIONARY SCHOLARSHIP IS CHANGING THE WAY WE LOOK AT RACE AND CLASS IN THE MOUNTAINS

TONIA MOXLEY



Virginia Tech sociologist Wilma Dunaway.  
Photo by Tonia Moxley

**Wilma Dunaway has always challenged assumptions, sometimes by her very existence.**

People assume her white skin makes her a white person in a predominantly white society. Not so, she says. People assume she's a middle-class sociology professor with middle-class values and aspirations. Not so, she says. People assume Appalachia is and always has been predominantly a white culture and the story of white settler-farmer-heroes is the story of the region. Dunaway thinks people assume too much, and she says her aim is to "blow their minds."

Born in 1944 to a Cherokee father and a white mother, Dunaway and her five siblings often tested the limits of East

Tennessee segregation laws. "Three of us were blue-eyed, three brown, and we were a rainbow in terms of skin tone," Dunaway says. In a world where every person was sorted and valued according to black skin or white skin, the Dunaways didn't fit.

In Tennessee, as in much of the segregated South, there were schools for whites and schools for blacks, but not for Indians. To get her children into white schools, Della Dunaway took Wilma, with her light skin, pale blue eyes, and cornsilk blonde hair, to register. "They looked at me; they looked at my mother, and they declared us all Caucasian."

While in high school, Dunaway played basketball in hopes of earning an athletic scholarship. Sherman Dunaway drove his daughter to her games, but he was not allowed to come inside and watch her play.

When the school principal learned that a "colored man" was meeting one of the "white" girls after the games, he asked Dunaway's mother not to send him to pick up his own daughter. "My dad was willing to put up with this crap to invest in my future, but I decided this was too much," Dunaway says. She quit the team.

Now an eminent and controversial scholar, Dunaway wants to change the way we think about race in Appalachian history.

In 1996, she electrified the discipline with her book, *The First American Frontier*, a revisionist study of the white settlement of Appalachia and the depopulation of Appalachian Indians. In this work, she debunked many myths about the region.

Appalachian studies had always conjured images of a golden age of small backwoods farmers and before that a heroic age of hunters, explorers and Indian fighters, says Appalachian State University historian John Williams. "Dunaway stripped away the gold and the heroism, exposed the heroes—or many of them—for the land thieves and



jobbers that they always had been, and argued that the seeds of Appalachian poverty were there from the very beginning.”

She also documented the depopulation of Appalachian Indians. “[Settlers] did engage in invasion of indigenous property. They did kill. They did destroy. They did steal. They did forcibly remove Native Americans to establish whites. If you can’t begin there in understanding the history of the region, then there’s an inbred racism in that history,” she says.

Many scholars in the field were shocked, Williams says. But *First American Frontier* won the Weatherford Award for best book on Appalachia that year.

This spring, Cambridge University Press will publish two new books by Dunaway: *Slavery in the American Mountain South* and *The African-American Family in Slavery and Emancipation*. “We do a lot of historical lying in this country,” she says. She intends to set the record straight.

Conventional wisdom says slavery in Appalachia was more benign than in the deep South. But Dunaway says that assumption is wrong. Through an exhaustive study of slave narratives, slaveholder records, and census and tax records from 215 Appalachian counties in nine states from western Maryland to northern Georgia and Alabama, Dunaway says the evidence shows that slavery in the mountain South was more brutal than in the deep South.

In these books, Dunaway describes the systematic destruction of black families through practices intended to sustain farming operations often one bad crop away from ruin.

Enslaved men were hired out to railroads and mines for most of the year, leaving their wives to work the fields and care for children. Enslaved women were subjected to systematic breeding programs, often by means of rape, and were made to bear more children more often than their deep South counterparts. Appalachian slavery was particularly deadly for enslaved children—half of them died of disease and malnutrition before the age of 15. Of those who survived, half were sold away from their families by their 15th birthdays.

Dunaway says that “probably half” of the Appalachian Studies Association disagrees with her, but she pulls no punches in her criticism of Appalachian scholars she faults for ignoring slave narratives and extrapolating to the entire region studies of isolated counties. “People in Appalachian studies think Appalachia’s white, and they have clung to that,” she says.

And she’s not white, she says, no matter what color her skin. “People jump to the conclusion that you’re white, but we can’t do this in our country anymore,” she says. “We don’t know anything anymore about people racially or ethnically by looking at their skin.

“White is cultural; white’s life experience. White is that you belong to the majority group that has the power and the resources.”

Dunaway was the only person in her family to graduate from high school, and she believes skin color had everything to do with it. The rest of her brothers and sisters were pushed out, she says. Dunaway eventually won an academic scholarship to the University of Tennessee at Knoxville where she earned a degree in sociology. There she met former UT chancellor Jack Reese.

The first time she answered a question in Reese’s English class, the whole room burst into laughter, she says. Reese took her aside and explained to her that she spoke “pidgin” English, a combination of Appalachian English and Cherokee words. He helped her find a speech therapist. Though she credits Reese with changing her life, she says this experience taught her that if it’s not handled very carefully, bilingual kids lose their indigenous languages.

As an undergraduate, she was already questioning stereotypes about the mountain South, particularly the myth of the isolated subsistence farmer. “I remember putting up my hand when I was a freshman saying to this anthropologist, ‘Can you take me out into the countryside here and show me one of these people? Because I don’t think there is such a thing.’”

But, Dunaway observes, “When you’re poor, your life is not neat and clean.” Two things happened to derail Dunaway’s academic career: her father suffered a stroke, and her youngest brother was sent to Vietnam. To help support her family, Dunaway dropped out of a master’s program at 24 to take a job with the Knoxville Urban League. Jack Reese sat on the board. “She was the glue that held that office together,” he says. “She is a fine person with a strong social conscience.”

As a young civil rights activist in Knoxville, Dunaway says she was targeted by the Ku Klux Klan, but she continued to work with urban and rural minority communities for 20 years.

**In 1988, Dunaway returned to UT to pursue her Ph.D. in sociology.** While still a graduate student, she made a

daring move. Over what she calls “the protests” of UT faculty, she contacted internationally-renowned sociologist Immanuel Wallerstein in France and asked him to review her work. He did.

“I am very impressed with Wilma; she’s an incredible researcher. She digs up everything, and I mean everything,” Wallerstein says. “She finds stuff other people have ignored or dismissed. She is a woman of enormous energy.”

Wallerstein, currently a senior research scholar at Yale University, founded world-systems theory. Wallerstein argues that over the past few thousand years, human history has been driven by a cycle of rising and declining global economic systems. He posits that the dominant system since the 15th century has been Western and capitalist in origin, and that this system has oppressed minorities and damaged the environment.

Dunaway has used Wallerstein’s theory of the world system to analyze the mountain South’s economic and cultural development. Her theoretical approach has garnered some criticism from historians such as University of Kentucky’s Ron Eller.

“We have to be careful about applying theories—especially those that reflect the patterns of modernization in the 20th century—back in historical time,” Eller says. Specifically, he worries that Dunaway has focused too much on who owned land in Appalachia and not enough on how land was used. Moreover, Eller believes Dunaway may be painting with too broad a brush.

“I find many of Dunaway’s generalizations about the pre-Civil War [Appalachian] economy unconvincing when applied to the interior and more mountainous counties that is the experience of my family’s Appalachia,” he says.

But Dunaway continues her assault on what she sees as a wall of denial in Appalachian studies. She accuses Appalachian scholars of perpetuating the “hillbilly” stereotypes they rail against by creating an imaginary “folk culture” based on middle class experiences.

“Wilma is not always the soul of tact,” Wallerstein says. “But she is a very honest person who tells it like she thinks it is.”

She does not spare the rod with Wallerstein or other world-system scholars. In an article titled “The Double Register Of History: Situating the Forgotten Woman and Her Household in Capitalist Commodity Chains,” she criticized *Review*, an academic journal edited by Wallerstein, for largely ignoring “gendered exploitation,

women [and] households.” “After 25 years,” Dunaway charged, “women are only a faint ghost in the world-system perspective.”

While researching the new books, Dunaway says she found an interesting trend in the slave narratives—one in every four ex-slaves interviewed reported an Indian parent or grandparent. Her current project is to document the existence of Native American slaves across the United States until after the Civil War.

As usual, Dunaway begins at the beginning. Appalachian Indians, like most Indian groups, already had a system of slavery in place. War captives were most often impressed into servitude, but it wasn’t necessarily a lifelong condition. Some captives would eventually become part of the community, and Indians never sold slaves far and wide, Dunaway says. But, because slavery did exist in indigenous communities, it was fairly easy for Europeans to begin trading Indian slaves.

She sites an instance in the late 1600s when a Cherokee delegation asked the British for weapons to protect themselves from slave raids by the Creeks. The British had armed the Creeks for the purpose of conducting slave raids against the Cherokee. The British then sold the Cherokee slaves in what is now the Northeastern United States and the West Indies. The Cherokee left with guns of their own and marching orders to conduct slave raids among the Creeks, also for sale to the British.

“The number one commodity coming out of the mountains, even before the fur trade, was Indian slaves,” Dunaway says. And she says she has evidence that the Indian slave trade continued after the emancipation of black slaves, into the 1870s.

**By most accounts, Dunaway is a gifted teacher.** “Students say there’s nowhere to hide in professor Dunaway’s classes,” Ryan says. “She’s a very strong teacher.” Dunaway requires class attendance and participation and teaches her students to use the Internet. She stands up for their interests, too.

“Universities do things that represent the interests of middle class students, not the interests of poor students,” she says. For example, Virginia Tech requires every incoming freshman to have a computer. Dunaway says she has students who can’t afford it.

Most important, she says she tries to teach her students to be better at race relations than their parents. “I know a lot about teaching my students not to hate racially because part



**This slave cabin was erected by the Preston family of Montgomery County, Va., circa 1850s. It was rescued from development in the early 1990s and moved to Historic Smithfield, a living history museum in Blacksburg, Va. Wilma Dunaway's work sheds new light on what life was really like for Appalachian slaves who lived in such cabins. Photo by Tonia Moxley**

of my survival mechanism as a kid was to hate white people," she says.

Dunaway credits her father with teaching her how to survive hate and fear, even her own. "I did stop hating white people," she says. "My father said that hatred causes you to diminish how much you can love the people you care about."

**SE**

*Tonia Moxley has written for several regional publications and has worked in online and print journalism. She is currently a religion columnist at The Roanoke Times.*

# Which Side Are You On?

## THE BIOGRAPHY OF A PROTEST SONG

MICHAEL HUDSON

She'd seen too much, choked down her anger for too long. She couldn't hold the song inside her any longer.

Florence Reece was 30 years old the year the men went on strike, and she saw the blood and starvation that came with it. She saw the hungry little ones, with tiny legs and stomachs swollen from eating green apples. And she saw the coal company's "gun thugs" roll up to her cabin, four or five carloads of them outfitted with their cartridge belts and high-powered rifles.

They were deputies in the employ of the man who held the title of high sheriff, John Henry Blair, but their wages were paid by the company and their job was to root out union men like her husband, Sam, who was organizing the others to fight for decent wages and working conditions.

"They kept harder and harder a-pushin' us," Florence Reece would recall. "I said, 'There's nothing in here but a bunch of hungry children.' But they come in anyway. They hunted, they looked in suitcases, opened up the stove door, they raised up mattresses. It was just like Hitler Germany."

She didn't have any paper, so she tore a page off a wall calendar, and started writing. In that moment of near-despair, she created a song that bristled with outrage and defiance.

*They say in Harlan County  
There are no neutrals there,  
You'll either be a union man  
Or a thug for J.H. Blair*

The verses simply set up the refrain—the question that, in that place and time, had to be answered.

*Which side are you on?  
Which side are you on?*

It was a challenge, it was a demand, and it was the question that drove the song, gave it a name and made it, in decades to come, the anthem of Appalachian coal miners

who rose up to fight poverty and exploitation.

Florence Reece, a coal miner's wife struggling to feed eight children and keep her husband alive, wrote the song in 1931, in the midst of a blood-soaked, two-year strike in Harlan County, Ky. The song spread well beyond Bloody Harlan. It's been sung at union rallies in mountain hollows, at folk concerts among the urban bohemians, in civil-rights marches along hostile highways, on the green lawn of the U.S. Capitol, in the movies, and in Great Britain, China, and other far lands.

"It's part of our history now," says Hazel Dickens, a folk-singing luminary who grew up in Montcalm, W.Va., just over the border from Tazewell County, Va. "You hear it everywhere."

Just as "We Shall Overcome" made itself the anthem of the American civil-rights movement, "Which Side Are You On?" became the most memorable of the rich procession of protest songs that came out of the Southern Appalachians.

"In a lot of ways, that song distills everything to its essence," says Stephen Mooney, a professor of English and Appalachian studies at Virginia Tech. He first heard the song in the 1970s, as a teenager tagging along at strike rallies in his native Dickenson County. "I remember thinking how damn cool it was that there were songs that were by my people and were about what had happened to my people."

Men died in explosions and rock falls. Families starved as coal booms turned bust. Companies hired private armies, evicted families, and harassed men who tried to organize unions. Miners retaliated and company gunmen and unionists waged small, bloody civil wars along mountain ridges and hollows.

These grievous conflicts in the late 19th century and the first half of the 20th inspired a legion of songs, as have the battles that continue today over union contracts, strip mining, and health and safety hazards underground. The

coalfields' literature of song includes Aunt Molly Jackson's "Kentucky Miner's Wife (Ragged Hungry Blues)" in the 1930s, Merle Travis' "Sixteen Tons" in the 1940s, and Steve Earle's "Harlan Man" in 1999.

Reece's union anthem stands out from the rest. Mooney notes that Ralph Chaplin's 1915 song, "Solidarity Forever," had broader fame in the 20th century American labor movement. But while it was written about a West Virginia coal strike, Chaplin was a Kansan raised in Chicago, and Reece's song became more intimately identified with Appalachia's coal wars.

Reece's creation, set to a Baptist hymn, "Lay the Lily Low," took a circuitous route to its place in the region's history and culture. Around 1940, a young folksinger, Pete Seeger, heard it from a miner living in New York City. In 1941, Seeger and his band, the Almanac Singers, recorded it and carried the song to a larger public.

Still, by 1947, Seeger was to recall, the song seemed almost forgotten in the coalfields. It was known in Manhattan's Greenwich Village, "but not in a single miner's union local." In time, that would change.

Every social movement needs an anthem. Seeger, Guy and Candie Carawan, the Freedom Singers, and other political troubadours provided the soundtrack for the upheavals of the 1960s. "We Shall Overcome" had been a union song before it was adopted by civil-rights workers. "Which Side Are You On?" also made the crossover.

The leader of the Freedom Riders, James Farmer, was in Mississippi's Hinds County Jail when he rewrote "Which Side Are You On?" He hoped to bolster local blacks who had been silenced by violence and economic reprisals, in a state where the governor, Ross Barnett, vowed to fight integration to the end.

*They say in Hinds County  
No neutrals have they met  
You're either for  
the Freedom Riders  
Or you "tom" for Ross Barnett*

Great battles were unfolding, too, in the Appalachian coalfields. Florence Reece was in the middle of the struggles, aging but feisty. In 1974, when the United Mine Workers went on strike in Harlan County, Reece was there, returning to Kentucky from her home in Tennessee. She



**Hazel Dickens, Alice Gerrard, Florence Reece, and Mike Seeger at the UMWA convention in Pittsburgh, 1974. Photo by Earl Dotter**

sang her famous song in a raspy voice and urged exhausted union families to stand together for the UMWA—a moment preserved on film in an Oscar-winning documentary, *Harlan County USA*.

Many people had sung the song by then, including Hazel Dickens (see page 46), who performed on the documentary's soundtrack and at union rallies whenever she was needed.

She liked the song because it was personal as well as political, a plaintive cry that rose from real life rather than grand ideologies. Dickens could picture the scene in her mind: Sam Reece hiding in the hills, Florence Reece back at



Dickens (center) performing with Marshall Wilborn and Ginny Hawker. Photo by Malcolm Wilson.

home with eight starving and frightened children huddling around her as the company men busted in.

"All because they wanted a decent wage and to be treated right. That's all they wanted—the basics," Dickens says. "I'm sure when she wrote it she had absolutely no idea that anybody would ever sing it. She just had to do something."

Dickens got to know Reece as they both sang for the union. "She was kind of like a mother to everybody," Dickens recalls. "The young people gathered around and listened to her. They sort of reminded me of feeding birds: eyes wide open, just standing there holding on to every word she said."

Florence Reece died in 1986, at age 86, dedicated to the union cause until the end.

**F**In the last years of her life, her song gained new fame through the work of Billy Bragg, an emerging English pop star who had undergone a political awakening during Great Britain's titanic coal miners' strike. It was during those intense months of 1984 that Bragg first heard "Which Side Are You On?"

"Everybody was singing it," he recalls, and he was struck by the "continuity of struggle" it represented—the sense "that this is not the first time that any of these things have happened to people, that sense that you're not struggling alone."

He "took stuff out of the newspaper, stuff that was happening, stuff that was there on the ground" and adapted Reece's song to his own country and his own time.

*The government had an idea*

*And Parliament made it law  
It seems like it's illegal  
To fight for the union anymore.*

He put it on his four-song EP recording of protest songs. The EP zoomed up the charts in England, something that would have been unthinkable in America, where big record labels and radio stations prefer to avoid politics.

Five years later, when thousands of Virginia miners went out on strike against Pittston Coal Co., Bragg was drawn to the confrontation. In the fall of 1989, he visited the UMW's Camp Solidarity in Russell County and toured the southeastern United States, putting on concerts to raise money for the strikers.

Dickens did her part, too. She sang at a benefit in New York City with Pete Seeger and at a rain-muddied rally in Southwest Virginia. And she joined Bragg in Chapel Hill, N.C., to raise \$5,000 for the miners in a show chronicled in a Billy Bragg documentary that took its name from the title of Reece's song.

As the concert ended, a group of union men and women, wearing the green camo shirts that had become the UMW's strike uniform, stood on stage with Dickens and Bragg to sing "Which Side Are You On?" Dickens included a verse tailored to the fight that had brought them together.

*Well down in Russell County  
No neutrals can be found  
You'll either be a union man  
Or one of them Pittston clowns.*

The song that poured out of Florence Reece generations ago has crossed over, evolved, and endured. It never gained the fame of "We Shall Overcome," but people are still working to keep it alive in a new century.

Mooney, the Virginia Tech professor, has his students study the song as they explore their Appalachian roots. An American folk-punk band, the Dropkick Murphys, covers the song in its album, "Sing Loud, Sing Proud." The song turns up, too, in a new documentary, *Hazel Dickens—It's Hard to Tell the Singer From the Song*.

Still, Dickens hasn't had many chances to sing it the past few years. The labor movement has been undercut by an anti-union axis in government and business. Union rallies don't come as often as they once did.

Dickens would like to see more workers fighting

shoulder-to-shoulder, acknowledging their common identity as members of the overburdened and underpaid. She'd like to hear people singing the words Florence Reece wrote on a page ripped from a wall calendar.

*Which side are you on?*

"I think we might need another movement," Dickens says. "We need other people out there singing these songs." *Michael Hudson is a staff writer for The Roanoke Times and a frequent contributor to Southern Exposure.* **SE**

To learn more about "Which Side Are You On?" and Appalachian labor struggles, see these books, music albums, and videos, many of which were helpful in writing these stories.

**Books**

- Guy and Candie Carawan, *Voices from the Mountains*
- John W. Hevener, *Which Side Are You On? The Harlan County Coal Miners, 1931-39*
- Kathy Kahn, *Hillybilly Women*

**Music albums**

- Billy Bragg, *Back to Basics*
- Hazel Dickens, *Hard Hitting Songs For Hard Hit People*
- Hazel Dickens, Sarah Ogan Gunning, Phyllis Boyens, and the Reel World String Band, *Coal Mining Women*
- Hazel Dickens—*It's Hard to Tell the Singer from the Song*
- O Sister! The Women's Bluegrass Collection*
- O Sister! 2 A Women's Bluegrass Collection*

**Videos**

- Harlan County USA*
- Which Side Are You On? Billy Bragg Goes to Moscow and Norton, Virginia Too*
- Hazel Dickens—It's Hard to Tell the Singer From the Song*

Hazel Dickens' video and music available at [www.appalshop.org](http://www.appalshop.org); more bluegrass music available at [www.rounder.com](http://www.rounder.com).

**"Which Side Are You On?"**

By Florence Reece

Come all of you good workers  
 Good news to you I'll tell  
 Of how that good old union  
 Has come in here to dwell

*Chorus*

Which side are you on?  
 Which side are you on?  
 Which side are you on?  
 Which side are you on?

My daddy was a miner  
 And I'm a miner's son

And I'll stick with the union

Till every battle's won

They say in Harlan County

There are no neutrals there

You'll either be a union man

Or a thug for J.H. Blair

Oh, workers can you stand it?

Oh, tell me how you can

Will you be a lousy scab

Or will you be a man?

Don't scab for the bosses

Don't listen to their lies

Us poor folks haven't got a chance

Unless we organize

This is just one version of Reece's union anthem. She penned other verses and many other songwriters and activists have written their own verses to go with the refrain's uncompromising question.

## Hazel Dickens Inspires a New Generation of Musicians

M I C H A E L H U D S O N



**F**olk musician Hazel Dickens is enjoying a resurgence of interest in her work. She's the star of a documentary about her life and is giving concerts around the United States.

Hazel Dickens' voice is the call of the high lonesome, the moan of working people who've been put down and put upon, the cry of a woman standing up for herself and for anyone else who's sick of being pushed around.

Dickens is a living legend in traditional music who inspired a generation of fans, musicians, and activists during the folk revival of the 1960s and 1970s. Now she's enjoying a surge of new interest in her work, thanks to a documentary about her life, *Hazel Dickens—It's Hard to Tell the Singer from the Song*, an appearance in the 2001 feature film *Songcatcher*, and Dolly Parton's recording of a Dickens-penned song, "A Few Old Memories."

Now in her 60s, at an age when many people are easing into retirement, Dickens remains as she was, a plainspoken singer and songwriter who embraces the blue-collar feminism and working-class tenacity that made her stand out in a country-music world ruled by sequin-spangled love songs or crying-in-your-beer ballads. In his new book, *Don't Get above Your Raisin': Country Music and the Southern Working Class*, historian Bill Malone writes that Dickens "was well ahead of all of the women singer-songwriters in her fusion of women-sensitive songs and class-conscious working-folk's songs."

Of course, if you ask Dickens if she's an activist, she'll say she's not much on labels. "We didn't grow up with that word," she says. "We stuck up for ourselves. We didn't call it feminism or activism. That's just something the intellectuals put on it."

She is a dark-eyed, dark-haired daughter of Appalachia, speaking over the telephone from her home in a soft but firm voice that retains the country rhythms of her upbringing. For the past three decades, she has occupied a modest apartment in Washington, D.C. She was born worlds away, during Depression times in Mercer County, W.Va.

Her father had been a timber man in Floyd and Carroll counties before heading to Kentucky to truck timber for the mines. Her brothers went in to the mines as soon as they were old enough.

Dickens was just 16 in the mid-1950s when still-hard times drove her to leave the West Virginia coalfields and look for work in Baltimore and later Washington. She was lonely and aggrieved by the rudeness of city folk who looked down on her as a hillbilly. She toiled in factories and waited tables. Her solidarity with fellow working people grew. She wrote protest songs—including "Black Lung," inspired by the choking, painful death of her oldest brother. Eventually, her singing made her friends and gave her a career.

*HAZEL & ALICE TOOK ON ISSUES OTHER MUSICIANS AVOIDED*  
By the 1970s, Dickens and Alice Gerrard gained acclaim as a folk duo. Performing and recording as Hazel & Alice, they represented something rare and



revolutionary in traditional music, where women were expected to defer to men, usually performing only in conjunction with husbands, fathers, or brothers.

Hazel & Alice took on issues that few performers wanted to tackle. Dickens' song "Don't Put Her Down, You Helped Put Her There" was a powerful attack on the sexual politics of barroom romance and the myth of the fallen woman. In "Coal Mining Woman," Dickens offered this simple advice to male miners upset by the idea of working underground alongside women: "If you can't stand by me / Well don't stand in my way."

Along the way, Dickens's music drove the soundtracks of two acclaimed films—1976's *Harlan County USA* and 1987's *Matewan*—and attracted a list of important admirers.

Country stars Wynonna and Naomi Judd credit Dickens with inspiring them to fight for a place in a male-dominated business. Punk singer Allison Wolfe, a founder of the riot grrrl movement, recalls Hazel & Alice records as the soundtrack for her childhood. The music, Wolfe says, helped keep her mom going through tough times and helped form Wolfe's feminist, anti-authoritarian worldview.

"Hazel's so amazing," says Wolfe, a member of the seminal women's punk band Bratmobile. "Her music was cool because it was so many things, because it was feminist but also really standing up for working people, and because it was music really done in a traditional way."

### DICKENS APPEARS IN THE "O SISTER!" TOUR

A recent article in *Punk Planet* magazine comparing Dickens's and Wolfe's styles of protest music is an example of the growing recognition of Dickens's legacy. Last year she was honored with a National Heritage Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts. In September, filmmaker Mimi Pickering's documentary, *Hazel Dickens—It's Hard to Tell the Singer from the Song*, drew a crowd at its Washington, D.C., premiere. Dickens's concert schedule draws both loyalists and converts. In February, she took the stage in Raleigh, N.C., as part of the "O Sister! Women in Bluegrass" tour, a spinoff of the *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* Hollywood movie and subsequent concert tour that's rekindled interest in traditional music.

Dickens is heartened by the strides women have made in recent years in bluegrass music, but says there's still discrimination, even against women who have attained headliner status. "They can't speak up and voice it because if they do, they won't get hired," she says. "A lot of people will resent me saying that, but I have heard stories."

Dickens endures because she's always spoken her mind and stuck to her roots. As her former singing partner Gerrard says, "Hazel is one of the strongest people I know. She came up in a hard life and she's taken it and made something really fantastic out of it." **SE**

*An earlier version of this article appeared at [www.womensenews.org](http://www.womensenews.org).*

**VOICES**

**THE SOUTH IN FIRST PERSON**

# DIARY OF A POULTRY

**INTERVIEWED BY JOHN BOWE; TRANSLATED BY SONIA BOWE-GUTMAN**



**Chickencatchers herding chickens, Chatham County, NC.  
Photo by Rob Amberg.**

## **I sort chicken parts in a factory in**

Duplin County, North Carolina. There's a lot of poultry in this area. I don't want to say the name of the company I work for, but you can use my real name because I'm not legally here in this country anyway. No one knows I'm here.

I work the night shift. The second shift. It starts at ten-thirty p.m. It's supposed to go until eight a.m., but sometimes we can go on till nine or ten. Sometimes till noon. It depends on whether we get our chickens done.

The chickens come from South Carolina. They slaughter them down there and then they cut them with machines. Everything is used. They're de-feathered, they cut off the feet, they're de-headed and de-necked—and they grind that in a mill and turn it into

**WORKER: JAVIER LOPEZ**

**Poultry factory work is fast-paced, repetitive, unsanitary, and dangerous. Photo courtesy of United Food and Commercial Workers.**

chicken feed. The rest they ship up here to us in trucks. We sort the parts. There's around thirty-five thousand chickens per truck.

I work in Department 20 with about a thousand other people. It's equally divided between men and women. Our job is to separate the wings, legs, and breasts. We also do some de-boning. After we separate, another department packages the chickens and sorts them by weight. Then another department labels them and packs them in crates and stamps them for shipping. I don't know where it goes when it leaves here. I think supermarkets, restaurants maybe.

I just cut up and sort chickens. That's my job. It's cold on the hands. It's hard on your health, because outside it's hot, but inside, the temperature has to be under fifty degrees.

**“They’re de-feathered, they cut off the feet,  
they’re de-headed and de-necked.”**



We get sick all year round even if we dress warm. Ice is always falling from the ceiling on your head. Some of it gets on your feet, into your boots. Your back’s always cold, and your feet are always wet.

There used to be mats on the floor, so your feet were not in the mess on the floor. But management eliminated them because there was an accident. A woman stumbled on them. Now there is water on the floor, and your feet are always wet. My boots are always cold. Some people use sneakers but those are worse. They get wet and damp, which makes it colder. Then there are the fans that just blast away all the time, making everything more cold.

You have to be careful with the knives and the machines, because everything is so slippery. A lot of fat falls on the machines and the floor. There’s fat everywhere. Everything’s greasy. So, especially when you cut the wings, you know, there’s a disk cutter with a rotating blade, so your fingers are in danger. And if you cut yourself, you’re going to get very contaminated from bacteria in the chickens because before you cook them, the raw chickens are full of bacteria.

I work very fast, and I’m not always checking what I’m doing, even while I’m doing dangerous work like de-boning with the disk saws. We are slaves. They don’t care. If we are not done with the truck full of chickens, we cannot leave work at the end of our shift. Sometimes it’s because of mechanical breakdowns, machinery malfunction, nothing that we did, but it doesn’t matter. We can’t leave. They don’t care how long you work. You just have to be very fast. So you’re not always working safely because you have to keep up with the production line. Of course, the managers always want more production in less time. It’s pretty tiring.

There is no support, no help. If a worker gets behind and doesn’t keep up with the line, out they go! Much injustice, no support. The supervisor is always right, the worker is just—there. Music is forbidden, so is talking with other workers, but we still do it. Yes, we do it. But I don’t say a lot myself. I am a quiet person.

I have been here seven months. I earned five dollars and eighty-five cents an hour when I started. After three months, they raised me up to six twenty-five.

**I DONT LIKE THIS CHICKEN WORK.** I used to work in the fields, picking fruit, tobacco. I like that better. In the field, you know that you can always make your quota, sometimes by twelve or two. So sometimes you have the afternoon free. It has disadvantages—if it rains or the crop is bad, maybe you have no money. But when it is good you can make double the money. It’s better. And maybe you get some fruit too, to eat or take home. Here, they don’t even give you chickens. If I wanted some, I would have to buy them. (Laughs.) But to be honest, I have no desire anymore to eat chicken.

**“Your back’s always cold, and your feet  
are always wet.”**

**“You have to be careful with the knives and the machines, because everything is so slippery. There’s fat everywhere. Everything’s greasy.”**

It’s pretty disgusting to work with meat all the time. The factory smells very, very bad. There is a lot of bacteria. Everything is a mess. There are broken windows, and there’s no security or safety at all. Anybody can come in at night. There’s a guard, but he’s asleep half the time, and he doesn’t care. Where is the safety? We have talked with the higher people but nothing happens. In many cases there are two thefts per week in the parking lot. They said they were going to hire a policeman. But they don’t.

The company wants everything for themselves, and nothing for the workers. You have to buy your boots, aprons, and gloves. Boots are ten dollars. Gloves cost fifty cents and aprons cost four dollars and fifty cents. That’s a lot when you’re only making six twenty-five per hour. Why should they make us buy this equipment?

I have heard that some of the poultry plants are better. This is apparently one of the worst ones. If you want to go to the bathroom, it’s very difficult. Even if you need to go you have to wait for break time and there are only two breaks per shift, and you have to eat during them. And the breaks last for half an hour each, but in reality they are less than twenty-five minutes because you have to dress and undress the gloves and things like that. They take this time away, and it’s important because if you’re going to eat, and go to the cafeteria, you still want to wash up before you go. But for the men there are only two toilets, so you have to wait in line. It takes at least five minutes to get into the bathroom just to wash your hands. And it is completely dirty and disgusting. There’s so much chlorine all over the place, it stings. It hurts your skin, your eyes burn.

Then there is the food. The “cafeteria”—and I call it that between quotes—is disgusting. They feed you chicken, chicken, chicken. It’s not good or clean there. Where you eat, it is unfortunately dark, smoky. People complain, but like with everything else, there is no discipline about cleanliness. Smoking should be done outside because the cafeteria is for eating. But there is no discipline, no respect. Nothing.

Another thing—racism. The large majority of workers here are illegal Hispanics, like me. There’s also some legal Hispanics, some Haitians and black gringos. But most of us are illegal Hispanics. The bosses know we’re illegal, and it’s illegal for them to hire us, but we’re the cheapest, so they don’t care. We probably wouldn’t work such a bad job if we had documents. And they always yell at us Hispanos. With the others they are more flexible, more lenient. The others come late sometimes, they talk on the phone. And they can get away with it. The black gringos that work here have more flexibility, they speak English. The blacks talk back, and they can argue because they speak English.

There are many druggies among the workers—a lot of marijuana. Lots of drugs and drinking—especially among the darker workers. But whenever something happens it is

**“The bosses know we’re illegal, and it’s illegal for them to hire us, but we’re the cheapest, so they don’t care.”**

**“We are slaves.”**



always blamed on us, the “Hispanos,” and the reputation of our race is affected. Every time, we all pay with our reputations. We never get a foothold, and they always stomp on us.

There is no better worker than the Hispanic. We work any hours, others don’t. But even if we work harder, because we have no papers and no English, we unfortunately get the worst deal.

**IM FROM MEXICO, VERACRUZ. I PAID A “COYOTE”** to bring me here—that’s what we call the guides. It cost me one thousand and two hundred dollars. To come you have to cross a desert, so it is pretty hard, and it is dangerous. It takes four days and three nights and you can’t get out of the truck. You can’t stop. You are in these trucks, packed just like sardines, very tight, and the trucks keep moving and turning around with us inside. If you did not bring your own water you are thirsty. You cannot stand up, you cannot do anything, except lie on your side and the person next to you puts their feet where your head is. It is very hard and very tiring to get to the U.S., to make this sacrifice to look for the “golden dream,” the dream of all people. People say they are coming to the U.S. to make money, but many go back when they arrive here and see what awaits. They cannot stand it here.

The coyote brought us straight to the work contractors who hire us and then the farmers hire us from them. A farmer brought me up to North Carolina from Texas. I was lucky because he paid me right. Sometimes they might say, “If you come with me, I will pay you one-fifty per week,” or something like that, then at the end of the week they tell you, “Here, take twenty dollars.” And when you complain and you say, “I need this for money for my family,” they say, “No, you owe me this and that” for gas and various things and you don’t get any money. Then you have nothing. You have no money, you don’t speak the language, and you don’t know anybody. You are lost. So I was lucky because I got paid right.

I’m hoping to eventually go home and start a business. I don’t want a boss. I am ambitious to a certain extent. I want to plan and achieve something. Working for someone else—there is nothing. You need a goal. Many don’t have one, don’t think about tomorrow. I have plans.

By tightening a little, and living squished, you can save a little. We have five people in my little house. It is not comfortable, we live one on top of the other, we share one car, but I save my money. And the exchange rate is good if you are paid in dollars. You have to sacrifice, not be comfortable, or you will not make it.

**“You are in these trucks, packed just like sardines, very tight. You cannot stand up, you cannot do anything, except lie on your side and the person next to you puts their feet where your head is.”**

**“People break into our houses and steal our money, because they know we can't keep our money in banks.”**

They pay us once a week by check. You can't open a bank account without a Social Security number, so it's a little difficult. You can cash the check in the company bank as long as you do it within twenty days. Many people go to some Mexicans, a service they run, but they charge a percentage, sometimes two percent. It's a lot to me. There are also a lot of thefts—people break into our houses and steal our money, because they know we can't keep our money in banks. It's all cash. That has been happening a lot lately. And in the parking lot, sometimes on payday, people steal the checks. Then you need to get a replacement and they make you wait a month to make sure it hasn't been cashed. So then you're without money.

That parking lot is the worst. There is no security or safety there. When we go to our cars, there is a constant risk of being robbed and killed, you know, for maybe one hundred and fifty dollars. We have no security eating, sleeping or working.

There was a case, about a month ago, where I was working inside and a boy near me went to this door outside to throw the garbage out and there was a man out there, another worker, who asked for a cigarette. The boy had none to give him. The man had a knife, one of the ones they give us to cut the backs of the chickens. He stuck the boy with it. He stuck him so hard that the knife, which is made of steel, got bent. The boy couldn't talk, and he was bleeding, and he was scared. Somehow, though, he got the knife away from the other guy before he cut his throat. They took him to the hospital. The police came and they knew who had done it, but they didn't do anything about it. No one cares.

I'm thirty years old. Too old for this kind of stuff. (Laughs.)

I am far from family, alone, thinking a lot. I have nothing. That's what I think about. I have nothing. I thought in the United States one lives a life of luxury, dressing well, partying, and all that stuff. You don't know the reality of it till you come here. It isn't the life one hoped for. It is pretty bad. It is not what I thought. People back home can't imagine that we don't have the comforts they think we do. The people I know here, the illegals, we are without our families from five years sometimes. I haven't seen mine for a whole year. I miss them. We hope to be together, but I can't just say, “I'm off.” I can't go back. It costs a lot to come here.

I've never had anything. I have always been poor. So I have this mentality that even if you have nothing, you still have to be proud of yourself. I would like to think, “I am poor but I did this. I achieved this.” I want to be proud of myself. This is a more clear satisfaction to me, more than owning a car.

Hear that? (Laughs.) That's a chicken truck. That's probably the one going to my factory tonight. That's what I'll be working on tonight. **SE**

**“I thought in the United States one lives a life of luxury, dressing well, partying, and all that stuff. You don't know the reality of it till you come here.”**



**“VOICES” IS A  
NEW SECTION  
DEVOTED TO  
FIRST-PERSON  
ACCOUNTS OF  
LIFE IN THE  
REAL SOUTH**

*This article is an expanded version of an interview published in Gig: Americans Talk About Their Jobs at the Turn of the Millennium (Crown, 2000), edited by John Bowe, Marisa Bowe, Sabin Streeter, and Rose Kernochan.*

## Documenting Globalization

Review by Jen Schradie

### **Uprooted: Refugees of the Global Economy**

National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights with Sasha Khokha, Ulla Nilsen, Jon Fromer, and Francisco Herrera, 28 min., 2001.

### **Trade Secrets: The Hidden Costs of the FTAA**

Jeremy Blasi and Casey Peek, 16 min., 2002.

### **Life and Debt**

Stephanie Black, 86 min., 2001.

The concept of globalization and the movement against it is usually presented as a recent phenomenon. According to the mainstream press, the anti-globalization movement started in Seattle in 1999 with a violent protest of young activists who smashed windows and fought off riot police while demonstrating outside a meeting of the World Trade Organization (WTO). Some reporting accurately portrayed the vast majority of protesters as being against corporate globalization, peaceful, and from all sectors of society—union members, community and religious activists.

But similar battles have been waged all over the country and the world for decades. For instance, 15 years ago, after the Schlage Lock company announced plans to move its Rocky Mount, N.C., plant to Mexico, workers organized a struggle for severance pay and health benefits. They also visited their counterparts in Mexico. Of course, this solidarity around globalization never made the national press.

In fact, international trade has historically benefited the few at the expense of many. And people have been battling its injustices all the way back to the days of the African slave trade, and perhaps even earlier. Those struggles have intensified in the past few decades as international finance organizations formed after World War II have increasingly been used to counter liberation struggles throughout the Third World. These diverse movements have more recently been lumped together under the broad labels of “anti-globalization,” or, more appropriately, “anti-corporate globalization.” And as the

fight has spread, scores of documentaries have come out to document these battles.

Three of these documentaries portray the people, the organizing and the policies behind the fight against the globalization alphabet soup—WTO, NAFTA, IMF, FTAA, etc. While these films vary in usefulness as concrete organizing tools against corporate globalization, they all provide an effective snapshot into different aspects of a very broad and complex issue. One focuses on the people affected, the second on the details of a particular trade agreement, and a third on how globalization is affecting one country.

*Uprooted*, a half-hour documentary released in 2001 by the National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (NNIRR), is a powerful documentary that shows the impact of globalization on real working class people, making it a good discussion tool for community and labor groups.

“We wanted to find a video about globalization to help explain some key concepts to immigrant rights groups,” say the films’ producers. “Unfortunately, the globalization videos out there didn’t seem to factor in the immigration connection. Frustrated with the options, we decided to create our own film.”

The documentary tells the compelling stories of four immigrants to the U.S., and how they’ve been affected by international corporate policies. First is Maricel, who was born in the Philippines. Her country was strapped with debt, leading the International Monetary Fund to impose harsh restrictions on the economy, which caused increased unemployment, poverty, and inequality. To put money into the economy, the government encourages citizens to work abroad and send money back home.

Maricel became a domestic worker in Hong Kong, where, she says, “I felt like I was a dog.” Her employer beat her. Later she went to work for the family of an executive with Philip Morris, the food and tobacco conglomerate. They brought her to New York, where she made \$2.20 an hour, half of which she sent to the Philippines. After 10 years in the U.S. as a domestic worker, she stood up for her rights and is now



organizing other workers to earn a minimum wage and get paid holidays and other days off.

The film's third story is about Luckner. He came to the U.S. from Haiti, where he used to work for an American corporation making baseballs for a dollar a day. According to the documentary, U.S. tax money is used to oppose minimum wage increases in Haiti, the poorest country in the Hemisphere. But the plant moved to China, where it could pay workers even less.

"They are not there to help people," said Luckner of foreign corporations. "They are there to take advantage of you and to get you to work as a slave." But Luckner didn't find work inside the U.S. any better. "When I got here I found things weren't as pretty as I thought," he said. He picked oranges for Minute Maid, owned by Coca-Cola, in Florida and joined the Farmworker Association of Florida. Now he's organizing people around immigration and worker rights.

All of the people highlighted in the documentary struggled with U.S. immigration. After arriving in the U.S., Luckner spent five months in INS detention. It's an irony that is one the film's most powerful points. U.S. policies force people from developing countries to seek work in the U.S. And yet once they get here, there is no support for these economic refugees.

Also tying these stories together is original music with a memorable tune and powerful lyrics:

*Where do the people go  
When they can't make a living?  
Where do the people go  
When their children are hungry?  
Where do the people go  
When banks take over?  
Where do the people go?*

Rather than focus on personal stories of people affected by globalization, *Trade Secrets* highlights the proposed Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (FTAA). "The latest threat is the FTAA," says the narrator, Mike Farrell (of



*M\*A\*S\*H* and now *Providence* television fame). "Despite the abysmal track record of NAFTA, it would extend the worst provisions of NAFTA to 31 more countries." An AFL-CIO official says in the film that from 1994-2000, about 766,000 jobs with pensions and health benefits moved out of the U.S. due to NAFTA. Filmmakers Jeremy Blasi and Casey Peek interview a range of people, including organizers, workers, and trade union officials.

The film does an excellent job driving home the ramifications of the FTAA's Chapter 11, which allows corporations to sue governments for violating free trade—even when these governments are merely protecting the health, safety and welfare of their people. For example, a Canadian chemical company is suing the state of California for banning a toxic additive in gasoline. And the United Postal Service (UPS) is suing the Canadian government for subsidizing mail delivery, claiming unfair competition. Who will decide on the fate of these cases? Elected or appointed justices? No, a secret trade tribunal.

*Trade Secrets* shows footage of workers demonstrating in the streets against corporate globalization, and the producers have put together an excellent action guide to make this a useful organizing tool.

Unlike the other two documentaries, *Life and Debt* was made by an established filmmaker, Stephanie Black, with a

## REVIEWS OF SOUTHERN MEDIA



Still shot courtesy of New Yorker Films.

large budget from major foundations. It features stunning cinematography of the people and land of Jamaica and a powerful sound track from the likes of Ziggy Marley and Mutabaruka, along with voiceover narration written by Jamaica Kincaid, adapted from her book *A Small Place*. The strength of this piece is its focus on one country and how globalization has affected the people and economy. The film begins by showing the typical scenes that Western tourists might see in Jamaica. Black then takes viewers behind those scenes to see the bleak reality and underlying challenges not usually glimpsed by tourists. She uses this creative treatment throughout the film.

Black mixes interviews with academics and politicians explaining the basics of globalization with the voices of Jamaican farmers and factory workers describing the conditions they face. She even gets an interview with an IMF spokesperson. One shortcoming, though, is that the viewer doesn't really get to hear from Jamaican women.

Michael Manley, the former prime minister of Jamaica, points out in the documentary that institutions like IMF and

the World Bank were created by developed nations after World War II to help with trade and to rebuild Europe. It's not surprising, Manley says, that these institutions pursue policies that benefit those same nations at the expense of the Third World. "You ask whose interest?" Manley said. "I ask the question, 'Who set it up?'"

In 1962, Jamaica joined other colonial nations' independence movements of the era. "We needed time to build economies to make it into the world," said Manley. In meetings with the IMF, Manley proposed a five-year development plan for the cash-strapped nation. The IMF refused, offering instead a short-term loan at the full interest rate with tremendous restrictions, which Manley reluctantly accepted. The country then found itself in increasing debt and with less control over its own economy.

One result, the film shows, is the dramatic effect of these restrictions on local farmers. A common IMF requirement is to restrict loans to small farmers while demanding an increase in imports, particularly from U.S. corporations. Black interviews a potato farmer, who says, "It is an insult to our dignity not to be able to produce and sell in your own market at home."

A World Bank document points out the failure of this approach in Jamaica, arguing that it "achieved neither growth nor poverty reduction."

With all her great footage, it would have been difficult to cut out any of the dramatic stories of small banana farmers or milk producers forced out of business because of IMF policies, but a shorter piece would not have dragged so much toward the end and would have allowed more time for discussion after a showing. However, at 86 minutes, the piece falls into the category of "feature length," which makes it easier to get such an important film into theaters. And it's still an incredible organizing tool. Black covers the organizing and protests of Jamaicans against the poverty caused by these globalization policies, though she does it through the technique of using news clippings, rather than interviewing the organizers. And by ending the piece with scenes of spontaneous and violent street protests, her final message is unclear. Is this what will continue to happen with

such oppressive policies? Or does it just fail to show Jamaicans organizing effectively?

There are many styles of globalization documentaries, ranging from videos of the street protests in Seattle and all over the world, to a PBS-produced, six-hour documentary, *Commanding Heights*, which received funding from multinational corporations, including FedEx, British Petroleum and even Enron, companies that often profit from IMF and World Bank deals.

Most documentaries explain what problems corporate globalization creates. It can be a challenge, though, to present solutions. With the documentary genre, concrete steps about what the viewer can do about the problem are best left to accompanying materials, like printed action guides or Web sites, or to organizational speakers. Documentaries on corporate globalization are often at their best when presenting inspirational stories about people around the world organizing to confront these problems in their own communities. **SE**

*Jen Schradie is a documentary filmmaker and freelance writer living in Oakland, California. She directed The Golf War: A Story of Land, Golf and Revolution in the Philippines. For more information go to [www.golfwar.org](http://www.golfwar.org).*

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## HOW TO SEE THESE DOCUMENTARIES

**Trade Secrets: The Hidden Costs of the FTAA**  
<http://henningcenter.berkeley.edu/projects/tradesecrets.html>

Henning Center/Center for Labor Research and Education  
UC Berkeley  
2521 Channing Way #5555  
Berkeley, CA 94720  
510.642.1583  
cost: \$15

### **Uprooted: Refugees of the Global Economy**

[http://www.nnirr.org/get/get\\_video.html](http://www.nnirr.org/get/get_video.html)  
National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights  
310 8th Street, Suite 303  
Oakland, CA 94607  
510.465.1984  
cost: \$20

### **Life and Debt**

[www.lifeanddebt.org](http://www.lifeanddebt.org) (for a calendar of screenings)  
U.S. distribution: [www.newyorkerfilms.com](http://www.newyorkerfilms.com)  
New Yorker Films  
85 Fifth Avenue, 11th Floor  
New York, NY 10003  
1.877.247.6200

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## DISTRIBUTORS THAT SELL FILMS ON GLOBALIZATION

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First Run Icarus Films – <http://www.frif.com>  
New Day Films – <http://www.newday.com>  
Filmmaker's Library – <http://www.filmakers.com>  
Women Make Movies – <http://www.wmm.com>  
Extension Center for Media and Independent Learning:  
<https://webservices1.ucxonline.berkeley.edu/ucmedia/distmain.html>

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## ORGANIZATIONS THAT LIST OR CARRY FILMS ON GLOBALIZATION

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Docuseek: <http://www.docuseek.com>  
Mediarights.org: <http://www.mediarights.org>  
Independent Media Center: <http://www.indymedia.org>  
Free Speech TV: <http://www.fstv.org>

# Deceit and Denial

## The Deadly Politics of Industrial Pollution

Review by Kristi Olsen

### Deceit and Denial: The Deadly Politics of Industrial Pollution

By Gerald Markowitz and David Rosner  
428 pp. \$34.95

In painstaking detail, this book documents the true stories of how two industries pursued profits at all costs. For years, Markowitz and Rosner's book details how the lead and vinyl chloride industries in the U.S. knowingly endangered workers, the environment, and the public. Based on the industries' own internal documents uncovered in litigation, this exposé describes decades of deceit and denial in pursuit of profit—to the continuing detriment of the public's health.

For most activists, nothing in this book will come as a surprise—same Erin Brockovich, different industries. Indeed, in their enthusiasm to join in what they must clearly envision to be their readers' surprise, it is the authors who seem a bit naïve. Through "startling discussions with former miners and their wives" the authors tell how they learned that toxins have an impact not just on workers, but also on the community, challenging assumptions the

authors previously held (preface, p. xii).

The value of the book, however, lies not in its predictable tale of corporate greed and reckless indifference, but in the fact that it relies on the words of the corporations themselves. However predictable such corporate abuses may seem to have become, admissions of corporate greed remain all too rare. As a result of litigation, the lead and vinyl chloride industries were forced to disclose thousands of internal company documents. The documents describe in detail the cover-up perpetrated by the industries—the control over scientific research, the manipulation of the government officials, and the lies told to the journalists and the public. It is this story that needs to be told. And histori-

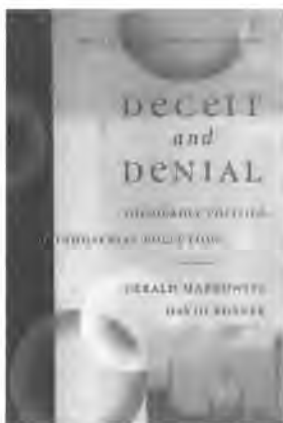
ans Markowitz and Rosner have told it exceedingly well.

Beginning in the early twentieth century and proceeding through the 1970s, the book portrays industry's efforts to keep the dangers of lead secret. It describes the propaganda used to convince people of the safety of lead, the industry's stranglehold over scientific research, and the use of gimmicks, such as free children's paint books, to advertise the virtues of lead paint. Only through the efforts of public health advocates did the true risks ultimately become known.

Of particular interest to the South, however, is the vinyl chloride industry. Heavily concentrated in Louisiana, Texas, and Kentucky, the vinyl chloride industry produces the chemical ultimately used to make plastic products ranging from pacifiers to shower curtains. During the 1960s and 70s, the industry became increasingly aware of the health risks associated with exposure to vinyl chloride, including a degenerative bone disease and various types of cancer. Yet, despite the risk that the chemical posed to workers and the public, the American industry conspired with its European counterpart to keep all information about the risk of cancer secret. The danger was only disclosed when, in 1974, a Goodrich company doctor in Louisville, Ky., discovered that four of its workers had died from a rare type of liver cancer and insisted that the truth be told.

The book contains a little something for everyone: corporate greed, scientific dishonesty, corrupt politicians, a brief history of the Occupational Safety and Health Act, and stories of public health advocates, union activism, environmentalism, and civil rights, along with a focus on Louisiana and the "Dow plantation." Although a little more of everything might be desired (particularly the role of organizing), the book provides a compelling answer to those who question whether the dangers of toxins and corporate greed have been exaggerated. Let the industries' own words speak for themselves—a more powerful indictment could not be made.

SE



## A Promise and a Way of Life White Antiracist Activism

Review by Matt Nicholson

### A Promise and a Way of Life: White Antiracist Activism

By Becky Thompson, University of Minnesota Press, 482 pp. \$19.95 (cloth)

Becky Thompson's *A Promise and a Way of Life: White Antiracist Activism* is a dense and heartfelt journey. Thompson depicts the past 50 years of white people's involvement in antiracist struggles through the stories of 39 white women and men, most of whom have been actively involved for the entire period the book covers. Their stories range from the nuances faced by antiracist consultants working with non-profit groups to the struggles of political prisoners serving life sentences for their revolutionary work in the 60s and 70s.

Thompson's pen alternates with ease between thorough academic analysis and gut-wrenchingly poetic moments of intimacy. She is utterly present in the text, disproving the myth of academic detachment. The reader connects with not only the stories and political perspectives Thompson relates, but also with her process of writing the book and the fears and limitations she experiences as a writer challenging racism.

Thompson turns a critical eye to the way white activists, through programmed, privileged, and entrenched beliefs in racism, have undermined the racial justice struggles they seek to be a part of. Almost all the people interviewed were utterly honest about their mistakes, and their similarity to each other

(and to myself) serves to highlight how racist structures inform and limit white consciousness. Thompson reveals these insights as a supportive gesture, clear in a sense of accountability but absent of condescending denunciations.

As a Southern white man, I often found *A Promise and a Way of Life* rewardingly painful to read. I was not alive during the height of anti-racist activism in the United States, but I struggle today to find my way on the path Thompson illuminates.

One problem with the book is that, while ample space is given to positioning lesbians and lesbian feminism in history and celebrating their contributions, gay men are almost entirely absent. The word "gay" isn't even referenced in the index.

Thompson nevertheless provides a concise volume that highlights the joys and pains of white people struggling toward not only an antiracist consciousness but also a daily practice of those values in our lives and activism. She holds out the hope of building a broad-scale, antiracist white culture that seeks an end to the oppression of all people, while being accountable to and taking leadership from people of color. Thompson illustrates lessons that can help liberate white people from the individualism, isolation, and ahistorical perspective that our white-supremacist culture teaches us. **SE**



# City On Fire

## The Forgotten Disaster That Devastated a Town and Ignited a Landmark Legal Battle

Review by Jay Wilson

### CITY ON FIRE

*The Forgotten Disaster That Devastated a Town and Ignited a Landmark Legal Battle*

Bill Minutaglio

HarperCollins, 285 pp

\$24.95 (cloth)

The early morning hours of April 16, 1947 saw the deadliest and most destructive industrial disaster that ever

occurred on American soil. Today largely forgotten, it was known as the Texas City Disaster.

The explosions were so severe they destroyed half of the city. Ten miles away the shockwave drove people to their knees. In Houston, forty miles away, windows blew out of buildings. In Denver, Colorado, the spiked wave on a seismograph machine prompted a technician to ask, “What the hell is going on in Texas?”

All told, more than 500 died. Thousands more were injured. Sixty-three remain unaccounted for. The pending civil action would result in the first time the U.S. Government was named as defendant in a lawsuit for knowingly putting its citizens in danger.

Bill Minutaglio’s *City On Fire* drags the story of this “hidden disaster” from under the rug of history. With concise prose he brings to life a cast of characters who had their lives irrevocably changed. Framing the story as a novel, he skillfully recounts that fateful day through their eyes.

Ground zero: the *USS Grandcamp*, a cargo ship loaded with several thousand tons of fertilizer made from ammonium nitrate. The ship’s crew and dockworkers loading the cargo had no idea the bags of fertilizer were inflammable, for none displayed simple warning labels.

An unstable compound, ammonium nitrate had previously been used as the explosive agent in bombs dropped in WWII. Many thousands of tons had passed through Texas City en route to Europe and Japan. Terrifyingly effective, this volatile compound would later be used in the Oklahoma City bombing and Osama Bin Laden’s first attempt to destroy the World Trade Center.

During WWII, Texas City was the “Silicon Valley” of the budding Age of Chemistry. Scientists discovered that ammonium nitrate could also be used as a miracle fertilizer. With the war now over, production of the fertilizer increased to help rebuilding nations in Europe as part of the Marshall Plan—at the dawn of the Cold War, there was fear our allies would turn to the Soviet Union for the aid they desperately needed.



Texas City benefited little from the industrial boom. A trio of government contractors—Union Carbide, Amoco, and Monsanto—treated the city like a banana republic. The land used to build the port's tin smelter had been purchased from the federal government for \$1. Meanwhile, Texas City received no tax dollars from the corporate giants. Many workers—black and Hispanic—lived in slums. The municipality couldn't even afford to maintain its fireboat, and had been forced to sell it.

When flames began, scores of curious men and women strolled down to the docks, attracted by the "beautiful smoke"—a brilliant plume of orange and crimson—escaping from the ship's hold. Fires were a regular occurrence. Only the curious color of the smoke drew comments from the assembled crowd. Few knew its hues were the result of a chemical fire.

They were told not to worry. Everything would be fine. Then the 51,000 bags of ammonium nitrate exploded, causing a tidal wave, knocking planes out of the sky, and sparking a chain reaction as fuel and chemical tanks also exploded.

Many wondered if Judgement Day was upon them. One survivor, believing herself to be dead, "couldn't understand why the rest of the bodies around her were weren't also rising to meet the Lord."

At the aftermath, the citizens of Texas City demanded answers. Authorities blamed communists, crying sabotage and terrorism. Callously, the federal government denied the city disaster relief, though billions had been sent overseas to rebuild broken Europe.

The people of Texas City began to suspect that the government had allowed its moral obligation to protect its citizens become a casualty of the Cold War. In the words of Texas Judge Thomas Kennerly, "So many people would have lived if they had only known the truth."

Kennerly ruled that the U.S. government was responsible, but U.S. attorneys appealed on the grounds of "sovereign immunity," a principle used to prevent citizens from suing their own government. But the U.S. Supreme Court upheld Kennerly's ruling, and the government ultimately paid \$17 million to the survivors.

It was an underwhelming sum, considering the suffering and destruction those in power had caused. This legal battle proved to be an important precedent, an example of democracy in action that forever shattered the illusion that "The King Can Do No Wrong." **SE**

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**Stan Goff**

**Robert Jensen:** Associate Prof. of Journalism, University of Texas–Austin; Author, *Writing Dissent*. TOPICS: *Following the Flag: The Failures of Journalism During War*; *Saying Goodbye to Patriotism*.

**Catherine Lutz:** Prof. of Anthropology, UNC–Chapel Hill; Author, *Homefront: A military City and the 20th Century*. TOPICS: Social, Cultural and Economic Impact of Military Spending; Repression of Social Justice Movements; Racism, Sexism and the Military.



**Rania Masri**

**Rania Masri:** Director, Southern Peace Research and Education Center; Contributor, *Iraq Under Siege* and *The Struggle for Palestine*. TOPICS: Impact of U.S. Military Contractors & Foreign Policy on Palestinians, Iraqis and Americans; Civil Rights in Times of War.

**David Potorti:** Co-Director, September 11th Families for Peaceful Tomorrows; former TV producer and journalist. TOPICS: *Remembering 9/11*; Media Ownership and Coverage of War.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

To invite a speaker, or to learn more about the Southern Peace Research & Education Center, please contact us at [rania@southernstudies.org](mailto:rania@southernstudies.org) or 919.419.8311 x27.

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