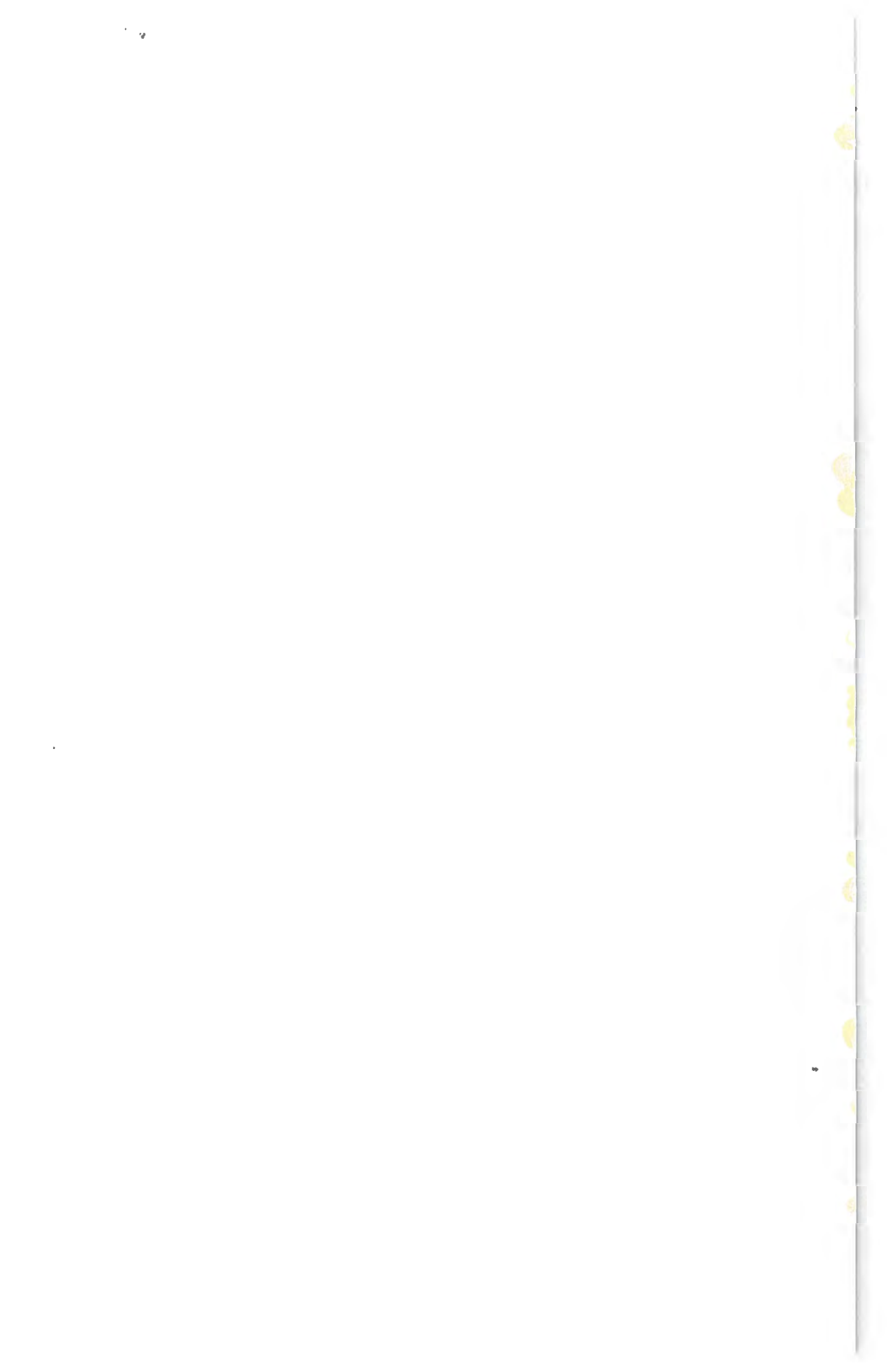


GATHERING



OF VOICES 2003•2004



A GATHERING OF VOICES



An Anthology of Student Writing
Whatcom Community College
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Matt Gamache
Hanging Shadow
Charcoal, 24" x 18"

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Introduction

Timothy J Ratté

I came to Whatcom Community College from Boston, Massachusetts. I came here with the intention of getting myself into Western's journalism program, because I wanted a job where someone else was going to pay my travel bills when I went out to see more of the world. I thought that the world's real stories happened in places removed from what most of us find immediately familiar: the war zones, the places of social conflict or the remote, primitive reaches, touched by Western culture and yet abandoned by it at the same time. I thought that what was truly interesting about journalism was meant to be far away, exotic and foreign. I wanted to get into journalism for the glamour in experiencing things less mundane from what occurred in my own backyard. Now I realize just how naïve that thinking was and I've since discovered that things in my backyard are more interesting than I thought.

My first visits to Bellingham before moving here centered around places like Fairhaven and events like the Farmer's Market, so my initial perception was that Bellingham was largely a liberal, Democrat (or Green party) inhabited, environmentally responsible, groovy, hippy kind of place. It was only after I moved here and had a couple quarters on the campus newspaper, *The Horizon*, that I saw how politically and socially polarized this community is.

I was editor of Whatcom Community College's *Horizon* newspaper during some times that were exciting times to be involved in journalism. War, and the controversy that surrounds it, is always an event that catalyzes journalism. The Jayson Blair scandal was revealing cracks in the foundation of one of the most venerable and respected news institutions in the world, *The New York Times*, prompting many of us to reevaluate our trust in the media (if we had any in the first place). And beginning around the end of February 2004, Whatcom Community College was rocked by the implications of the infamous student council action that came to be referred to as The Decision.

Though the Horizon always kept a reporter, typically the assistant editor, in the weekly student council meetings in case something newsworthy should arise, it was generally considered to be a pretty uneventful gig; often the meetings touched on nothing more serious than doling out funds for student clubs, or voting on Associated Students of Whatcom Community College sweatshirt styles.

"Something interesting happened in today's student council meeting," Glenn, my assistant editor at the time said when he returned from the meeting on February 12. He told us that the council had re-voted on their previous week's decision to back a Big Brothers, Big Sisters fundraising event for their quarterly service project.

The reason for the revote was that several council members had decided that they took issue with Big Brothers, Big Sisters' policy that allows gays or lesbians to mentor same-sex children. They reasoned that since Big Brothers, Big Sisters had a policy prohibiting adult mentors (bigs) to mentor children (littles) of the opposite sex, that a policy allowing homosexual bigs to mentor same-sex littles was hypocritical and could even represent a sexual threat to littles. The re-vote was held by secret ballot, which is typically reserved for election of student government officials, and passed 14 to 8.

The council likely had little notion of the sensitive nature of what they had voted on, but the faculty advisors to the council certainly did. That same afternoon, one of the faculty advisors took me into his office, closed the door, and quietly and carefully recommended that if I intended to have the newspaper report on the event, he would urge that we do so with "responsibility," "balance" and "caution."

I resented the fact that he thought we wouldn't.

Several members of the council immediately took umbrage with the decision, decrying it as anti-gay, and spread the word of the decision around campus. Within two days, the college was humming with the unfamiliar vibration of a real controversy.

On February 19, the council held a "special" open session to hear the concerns of students and community members, but said they would not be answering questions at that time. More people

wanted to take the podium to address the council than time would allow them to speak.

Most were outraged that the council would equate “gay” with “pedophile.” Many called for the resignation of the so-called homophobic council members, saying that they “defied” Whatcom’s “Affirmation of Inclusion,” which states that the campus should provide an environment “free from harassment and discrimination” for people of all “races, ethnicities, national origins, religions, ages, genders, sexual orientations, marital status, veteran status, abilities and disabilities.” Many students were angry because they felt that it was the conservative Christian beliefs of some council members that led to their decision and that this did not represent them as constituents. To them, this was a mini-“separation of church and state” issue. Still more people felt that the council’s misguided reasoning led them to make a decision that ultimately hurt the very children they were trying to “save.”

That meeting was, at its essence, an opportunity for students to direct their dissatisfaction at the council’s decision, (though a few brave souls stepped up to express support for the decision), but ultimately because of its unidirectional nature, those who showed up for answers left more frustrated than they had been going in.

A second public meeting was held on February 24, and it was intended to be an open forum where the community could get answers to their questions, what Dean for Educational Services, Trish Onion hoped would be an opportunity for “civil discourse.” But it took on much the same mood of the first one: a public stoning where an unsatisfied community channeled frustration toward a largely reticent, but occasionally defensive student council. Even administration was criticized for its reluctance to take action against the student council for The Decision, (though I would argue that any action taken by the administration would have been construed as interference into a student-run government and tantamount to censorship. Administration was damned if it did, damned if it didn’t.)

The student body felt angry and betrayed by their government, and what they wanted from the council was a large serving of abject apology, with a side of mea culpa. The members of council that brought about the idea of reversing their commitment to Big Brothers, Big Sisters maintained that their decision was not

based on discrimination against homosexuals, but on the organization's "inconsistencies." What the council wanted was for students to just understand that they were not all a bunch of bigots, and to please promptly forget about it and move on to something else, thank you. Neither side got what they wanted, but in many ways the college community benefited – the student body, which had previously been apathetic to their student government and campus community started paying attention and letters to the editor poured into the Horizon.

Though unfortunate in its negative nature, there was finally some dialog between students and student council.

Whatcom's Affirmation of Inclusion is a noble and admirable document. It is also constitutionally unenforceable. So is the Bible. While it is important that we have the right to observe the Affirmation of Inclusion or the Bible, it is more important that we are not *required* to.

In this country it has to be acceptable to hold the belief that homosexuality is a sin as much as it is to fight for the rights of gays and lesbians to marry. It has to be okay that the Gay/Straight Alliance hangs posters on bulletin boards, as much as it is okay that the Ku Klux Klan does too. That's the nature of our freedom.

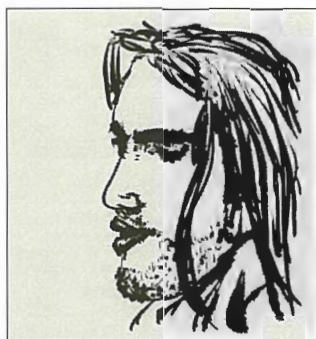
The legacy of the student council's infamous decision was the very dialog that is the essence of that freedom. Through petitions and bulletin board postings, in classroom discussions and (to my joy) in the campus newspaper, the college community was finally loud with the conversation that demonstrated the diversity of its many voices. And here's to the hope that the conversations continue...



Asa Braam



Adria Chilcote



Diego Castello



Jamie Severson

Self-portraits
Computer illustration,
8" x 10"

Smoke & Mirrors: Taking Back Democracy

Tommy Ball

This country, with its institutions, belongs to the people who inhabit it. Whenever they shall grow weary of the existing government, they can exercise their constitutional right of amending it, or their revolutionary right to dismember it.

—Abraham Lincoln's inaugural speech, 1861

Mr. Lincoln got it. He understood what the great experiment that the United States of America truly was: a country by the people and for the people. What gives us this power? The Constitution. Never in human history has there been a governing document such as this, one whose very parchment is what the governing body revolves around, a parchment that is both living and concrete in nature, a parchment that gives us—we the people—a voice to have a say in how our country is run and who is running it. However this right has a prerequisite that goes along with it—no, a duty. It requires us to care, to act, and to be passionate enough about this country of ours to do all that is in our power to make sure it goes back to us—we the people. For we need to take back democracy; far too long have we been indolent, hesitant and lazy with our country. We must become real citizens, citizens who care and are willing to submit ourselves to a cause that is a lifestyle, a lifestyle that is Patriotism.

Long have countries attempted ways of governing that have resulted in failure. I believe they fail because they do not take our human needs, and our human natures into mind. It is a tennis match that will never be won between giving us complete liberty to do as we wish and constraining us so that we have barely any civil liberties at all. Both extremes are evil, and what is needed is a common place between the two; no other form of government in the world has the ability to do just that. Ideally we run the country through our leaders; we choose who we feel has our best interests in mind, and trust the rest to them. At the same time our voice is

heard directly in the outcome of votes in the local arena, yet again our voice and will is taking charge. The power lies not with a monarchical family, nor with a dictator who rules by fear and terror, but with "we the people." That is, if we choose to take on this challenge and act upon this right we have, to act as our constitution allows. Alas, this has not been the case for years, and especially among young people.

We have become lethargic and intimidated by "the system," as it is often called. The very system that we set up over two-hundred years ago we look at in disgust and desire to have no part in. Politics and bureaucracy have—throughout history and especially the 20th century—left a bad taste in our mouths, and this has led us to believe that there is no point in caring about politics, that there isn't a whole lot we can realistically do. Our mindset as a people has changed, and we have become very shallow and dull as a nation. The Greek philosopher Plato would look at our nation and easily compare it to his own, and possibly look at it as being even shallower. In "The Allegory of the Cave" Plato depicts for us people in a cave confined to the ground never knowing anything else, forced to look ahead so as to see shadows cast from behind them, and to hear the sounds that deflected off the wall on which the shadows were projected.

And if they were in the habit of conferring honors among themselves on those who were quickest to observe the passing shadows and to remark which of them went before, and which followed after, and which were together; and who were therefore best able to draw conclusions as to the future, do you think that he would care for such honors and glories, or envy the possessors of them? Would he not say with Homer, "Better to be the poor servant of a poor master, and to endure anything, rather than think as they do and live after their manner?" (Plato 318)

We have become these people in the cave. The government has lulled us into a state of lethargic discontent, a state where the governmental powers that be know very well they have us at their mercy, and that they can get away with practically anything

without us saying so much as a word about it. We have stopped caring about things that matter and have taken up the silly trifling things that now occupy our lives. The primary culprit is entertainment; I fear this has taken too grand of a stage in our lives, for I now begin to suspect this of being a way for the government to lull us into complacency and disregard the truth. They know that when we are entertained we don't know, let alone care, about those civil liberties that are being stripped from us. Why do you think government puts so much money into sports franchises?

For the most part news is not news; it is deceitful rubbish, which is controlled by not only large corporations, but the government itself. The biggest culprit of informative entertainment is cable news—this form of media that for the most part is how our nation gets its information about not only our country but the world. After 9/11 our president did a good job of attempting to brainwash us with his idea of patriotism, and the media all too much had a hand in that.

The word patriotism as of late has been cheapened, and watered down by cheapened and watered down politicians and bureaucrats; these men have used every facet they can muster to tell us their idea of patriotism, and all too often their idea of patriotism is a way for them to obtain more wealth, more power, or both. This idea of patriotism we are given, and one that I think many of us believe, is to believe in the government whether we see why they are doing things or not.

It is our fault. It is our fault that we have fallen into such a deep crevasse, and it is definitely our fault that we have been allowed to be scared into relinquishing our duty to care enough about this country to act in a way that will get us out of the crevasse, and see again the dream that was American democracy. We can't blame the government, we can't blame the media, and we sure can't blame the constitution. We have stopped becoming revolutionary, and begun to be mere subjects of a royalty that merely has a new face. We have stopped caring about what matters in life, and allowed ourselves to be entertained without a care in the world. Is it not apparent that there is more to life than sports, T.V. and movies? These aren't bad things, but they have taken too much of a role in our lives, and have since been all too dominant in our lives.

The culture of smoke and mirrors pretends to care about people but really just cares about itself. This American dream that we talk about has become cut throat and devilish. We have stopped caring for others and we look only upon our own gain as the point of life. This is the lie that we have allowed the American dream to turn into; we have let it go from prospering, to prospering at any cost even if that cost degrades others. We have allowed ourselves to fall into this culture, and allowed the government to be bought out by big business. This big business mentality that we have allowed has turned our very government into a business, one that does not look out for its own country's people, let alone other nations' people. We have allowed ourselves to be the people in the cave, our lives staring at the trifle, at the temporary, and not at the truth, the truth that is living for something real, living for life and happiness not only for oneself but for the good of others. This is what we must do, and by doing this we will be real patriots: people that live for something, and people that have a drive to serve a cause that will make a difference.

Patriotism is not a call to arms; it is not the request to follow the leaders just because they are there; it is a lifestyle that requires not just voting, for voting is nothing. As Henry David Thoreau tells us, "even voting *for what is right* is doing nothing for it, It is only expressing to men feebly your desire that it should prevail"(Thoreau 150)/ As we saw in the last presidential election expressing one's views is not enough, what is needed is for one to be an advocate of not an opinion, but of a cause. For "A wise man will not leave the right to the mercy of chance, nor wish it to prevail through the power of the majority" (Thoreau 150). We must act upon injustice, and fight the powers that be if they are the catalyst of that injustice. One cannot merely express one's views and ideas, but must appeal to those you wish to convince and to lobby others to see that the change you seek is just and correct; this is what advocacy is and this is how change occurs. Democracy was built for this kind of person; it was created to allow the people who want the best for the country to have the power to fight for such a thing. I in no way believe that democracy is the best form of government possible for the best kind of people possible, but indeed it is the best form of government possible for flawed creatures such as we.

This is the only way we can get back to democracy. This—caring, advocating, being a patriot, being a good person for the sake of being a good person—is precisely how we go from being a backsliding nation to attaining whatever we possibly can attain in the way of both equality and liberty. I feel that being a patriot by engaging in this lifestyle is not only good for one's nation, but good for the world as a whole. Yes, this effort is an individual one, and each individual is small, but what is important is the quality with which you attempt your own individual revolution, "For it matters not how small the beginning may seem to be: what is once well done is done forever"(Thoreau 154). Not only that, but as a tiny spark can create a wildfire so big that it will engulf a mountain, so thus can one individual spark such an uprising in a people that as a whole they will create a nation such as ours, one that has its people's best interest in mind, and one that cares less for profit for itself than it does for the betterment of humanity.

Rome, England, the United States of America—each has been a reflection of the former, and each has fallen from its mighty pinnacle short of the latter. There is a dangerous possibility that the world is right, that we—the eight hundred pound gorilla—are too big, too arrogant, and too pushy for our own good. Though many of us agree, few of us will do anything about it. We have been all too idle and lulled into believing that we are like the big kid on the block and have nothing to worry about, and even if 9/11 woke some of us up from this slumber to the realization that this world does not entirely love us, we largely still go about our days letting the government not only do nothing about the atrocities the world faces, but in fact create its own atrocities, compounding the issue. Our government for far too long has looked out for its own good and we as its bearers must be what patriots we can be and take it back. This cannot just happen through voting and petition signing, but must come forth through advocacy, and through the desire to make this nation better. A kind of revolution needs to occur, one that gives the people back its duty to control the government rather than the government controlling the people. This is our duty, this is our responsibility as humans, and this is what it is to be a patriot.

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If I Had a Hammer

Sherri Reed

I urge you to learn the harsh facts that lurk behind the mask of official illusion with which we have concealed our true circumstances, even from ourselves. Our country is in danger: Not just from foreign enemies; but above all, from our own misguided policies, and what they can do to this country. There is a contest, not for the rule of America, but for the heart of America.

—Robert F. Kennedy

I admit it. I am selfish. I fantasize saying to my friends and family that I unequivocally, one hundred percent and with no reservations support the Palestinian fight for autonomy and an end to human rights violations against them. But since the year 2000, I've felt I must begin that sentence with, "I don't agree with the suicide bombers, but other than that, I unequivocally...."

In lamenting this current wave of Palestinian violence, though, I realize that not only am I selfish, I am daft as well, a victim of newsspeak-*Magic Eye* style illusions created by the administrations of United States and Israel and disseminated by the press. These two-dimensional images of *terror* (the "us" dimension, the "them" dimension) conceal the three dimensional complexity of the lived reality, the history in process, life on the ground. "If the only tool you have is a hammer, every problem begins to look like a nail" (Campbell 153), and we've been shown a great big bag of nails in the Arab Middle East.

If one believes that Israel has the right, as a nation, to use violence to protect themselves, one must also believe that the Palestinians have the same right. Unless we view the tactics of Israeli military violence and Palestinian suicide bombers as equivalencies, the peace process cannot stand on firm foundation. Even if we are uncomfortable with violence in any form, as I am, an expectation that the Palestinian people use non-violent methods in their struggle against Israel's military oppression of them symbolizes a profound unwillingness to view them as a sovereign

people with rights to a legitimate nation. It is an acceptance of the bias manufactured and encouraged by those in power.

We expect and accept non-violence as the tool of *people*, but we expect and accept violence as the tool of *nations*. The media and our government lead Americans to believe that Israel, a recognized nation, is at *war* against Palestinian *terrorists*, and we are content to believe. Never mind we've never heard the term Palestinian war for independence, or a reference to a nation called Palestine. Never mind that much of Israel's violence looks like apartheid. The lens focuses on *defense* from terrorists, and as such is justifiable to Israelis and foreigners alike who do not delve deeper than the evening news or the White House pressroom. On the other hand, violence by or on behalf of Palestinians is portrayed as murderous, anti-Semitic, and often as the ultimate realization of Islamic fundamentalism against Israel, America, and all things modern or secular. Every instance of Palestinian violence diverts attention from Israel's immoral and illegal activities—a public relations tool they are exceptionally skilled at using.

In America, the Israeli system of oppression is not discussed with the vigor and intensity with which Palestinian violence is discussed. In fact, a new vocabulary and paradigm have taken over much of the discourse. This newly defined enemy, *terrorism*, signifies:

...first, in relation to "us," the *alien* and *gratuitously_hostile* force. It is destructive, systematic, and controlled. It is a web, a network, a conspiracy run from Moscow, via Bulgaria, Beirut, Libya, Tehran, and Cuba. It is capable of anything. Most of all, terrorism has come to signify "our" view of everything in the world that seems inimical to our interests, army, policy, or values. As such, it can be used retrospectively (as in the cases of Iran and Lebanon) or prospectively (Grenada, Honduras, Nicaragua) *to justify everything "we" do and to delegitimize as well as dehumanize everything "they" do...*Sequence, the logic of cause and effect as between oppressors and victims, opposing pressures—all these vanish inside an

enveloping cloud called "terrorism." (Said "Permission" 254. Emphasis added).

This model not only puts "them" in a shadow of evil, it works to protect "us" as well. "Since Israel is in effect a civilized, democratic country constitutively incapable of barbaric practices against Palestinians and other non-Jews," its actions against the Palestinians are *ipso facto* justified (Said, "Permission" 245). In other words, the actions of the nation of Israel are legitimate, and the actions of Palestinians are gratuitously hostile, inhuman, even alien. Instead of viewing Palestinian suicide bombers as an "illegitimate and immoral response to an illegitimate and immoral occupation" (Abunimah 1), they are seen as removed from history, standing alone like drones controlled by some criminally insane super-villain. In fact, many Americans and Israelis seem perfectly happy to use this manufactured model of the Manson-family Palestinian to view *a//*Arabs.

So, if this violence is not the problem, but a symptom of a larger dynamic, of what is it a symptom? This may seem like a difficult question rife with complexities like religion, colonialism, racism, military-based economies, and western guilt for not acting early enough to end the Holocaust. What we have to help us, however, are hundreds of documents created by the United Nations, both about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict specifically, and about basic human rights, including those of non-nationed people. These represent agreed-upon rules of conduct on which nations base their actions, especially as pertains to those exerting power over others. It seems like a good starting point—a point of little contention.

Over the past fifty years, there have been literally thousands of pages of documentation on the issue of peace in the Middle East. Since its inception in 1948, Israel has been censured by the UN for its actions toward the Palestinians: Res. 242 (demanding withdrawal of the Israeli army from occupied territories); Res. 194 (demanding repatriation or compensation of refugees); Res. 904 (demanding disarmament of settlers); Res. 446 (stating that the occupation is illegal); Res. 57/126 (reiterating that the occupation is illegal); Res. 465 (stating that the settlements violate the Geneva Convention); Res. 452 (demanding a stop to settlements). This represents only a tiny portion of the vast number of rulings, many of which exist only to reiterate previous resolutions.

Israel's noncompliance with international law is documented in this way—the UN virtually begging them to stop acting in a manner contrary to peace, human rights, and the accepted laws of war. Like a hammer hitting a nail over and over again, the story stays the same—Israel ignores international law and is rewarded by the United States with billions of dollars every year and virtually unconditional support by Democrats and Republicans alike.

In addition to resolutions pertaining specifically to the region, the UN created the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights.¹ Israel breaks two-thirds of these Articles in their treatment of the Palestinians (Articles 2.1, 2.2, 5 through 10, 11.2, 12, 13.1, 13.2, 15, 17.2, 20, 21.2, 22, 23, 25.1, 25.2, 26.1, and 28) (Ishay 407). Not the most atrocious of Israel's violations but perhaps at the heart of the matter, is Article 15.1, "everyone has the right to a nationality" (Ishay 410). Importantly, 15.1 states that "no distinction shall be made on the basis of political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty" (Ishay 408). Apparently, according to Israel and the United States, this does not apply to Palestinians, including those in exile who, in most cases, are not citizens of their host countries either. According to the Palestine Bureau of Statistics, there are about 9.3 million Palestinians worldwide: 3.6 million in the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem, 4.6 million in Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon, 578,000 in other Arab nations, 223,000 in the United States, and 295,000 in the rest of the world. In 22 years it is predicted this number will double to over 19 million stateless people.

One UN resolution that deals specifically with the rights of people without self-rule is Resolution 1514 (XV), "The Declaration on Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples" (1960). Of the seven articles, Israel violates four, most importantly, that "all armed action or repressive measures of all kinds directed against dependent peoples shall cease in order to enable them to

¹ The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was set forth in 1948, ironically, the same year the state of Israel was created. Various human rights documents have been ratified in the last 55 years, including the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), and the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966). These represent a very small fraction of internationally accepted documents regarding human rights.

exercise peacefully and freely their right to complete independence, and the integrity of their national territory shall be respected" (UN). Although the term 'colonial' does not seem a perfect fit, this resolution is referenced by the UN itself in another important resolution, "The Right of the Palestinian People to Self-Determination" (Resolution 55/87, April 2000). Importantly, this resolution "1. *Reaffirms* the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, *including their right to a State, ...*" (UN. Emphasis added). The word *reaffirms* proves again that Israel's noncompliance with international law is easily tracked.

The United Nations has declared the Palestinian right to an independent state. It has demanded through various resolutions the evacuation of all Israeli settlers and troops from the occupied territories. It has scorned Israel innumerable times for human rights violations. Yet Israel continues to:

...bomb Palestinian homes with helicopter gunships, advanced missiles, and tank barrages; Israeli soldiers kill 400 civilians, cause 12,000 casualties, bring down economic life to a 50 percent poverty level and 45 percent unemployment; Israeli bulldozers destroy 44,000 Palestinian trees, demolish houses, create fortifications that make movement impossible; Israeli planners build more settlements and settlement roads – all this while maintaining the image of a poor, defenseless and terribly threatened people. (Said "Time")²

Does this sound *justified*, or gratuitously violent and dehumanizing? Like a blanket of invisibility, the *terrorist* label transforms Israel, which clearly violates the human rights of millions of its citizens, into a bastion of democratic ideals in a sea of backward inferior Arabs. But these certainly aren't the democratic ideals I hold dear.

So the question stands—do the daily human rights violations, apartheid living conditions, ineffective/non-existent UN justice, a failed "peace" process, and a seemingly inexhaustible amount of monetary, military, and even moral support from the United States combine to cause the symptom of Palestinian violence? I think so. For all the years of censure by the UN, Israel

² Published in March 2001 – numbers have, of course, increased since then.

does not abate in its illegal actions. Borders have been drawn and then moved or erased, rules laid out and then broken. There is no country on the map called Palestine, and to some, no people called Palestinian. The fact that the sheer hopelessness of their situation might drive some to suicidal violence is a matter not admitted, much less considered in the debate.

Martin Luther King said that “he who passively accepts evil is as much involved in it as he who helps to perpetrate it. He who accepts evil without protesting against it is really cooperating with it.” So in the end, I am selfish—I wish my voice for Palestinian justice did not have a caveat; I am daft—I let what I know in my head and my heart become dulled and distracted, or I am silent; but most importantly, I am complicit—a public relations campaign has a seller *and* a buyer. The heart of this nation should not be sold to the highest bidder or the most eloquent pitch-man. Americans have the luxury to seek the truth and it is, therefore, their responsibility to do so. If we do not we seek truth, we will perpetuate lies—ies that oppress, lies that dehumanize, lies that kill. Until American and Israeli citizens stop seeing Arabs and specifically Palestinians as nails, we will not object to Israel using a hammer—we’ll help perpetrate the blow. Until we stop seeing Israel as a nation *ipso facto* incapable of human rights violations, we will not object to their “defense” methods of curfews, ghettos, house and grove demolition, harassment and imprisonment of entire families, “targeted” assassinations, and apartheid walls—we’ll cooperate. This job of building two countries side by side that live in peace does not require a hammer; it requires humanity.

If I did have a hammer, I’d turn it around and use the other end. I’d pull the nails out of the coffin burying peace in the Middle East, and I’d nail together a sign that read, “Welcome to Palestine”, putting it deep in the ground, facing Israel, on the 1949 Armistice line.

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Politics of Language

Kealani Kiesling

Where does our prejudice about language and speech come from? Is it rooted in our natures? Is it biological evolution playing out, our evaluating how well another has adapted to our speech environment? Or are we conditioned to be linguistically ethnocentric, to judge another lacking because of their imperfect grasp of standardized English? Opinions vary widely on the subject, whether we should take a prescriptive or permissive view of language and speech. In this essay, I will examine various perspectives on the politics of language as evidenced in essays written by James Baldwin, Fredrick Douglass, Amy Tan, George Orwell, and Andrew Sullivan. The politics of language is complex, revealing discourse's integral relationship with identity, freedom, and power.

What is language? Why do we use it? Language sets us apart from any other creature on the planet, allowing us to communicate with one another in diverse and creative ways. In his essay "If Black English Isn't a Language, Then Tell Me, What Is?" James Baldwin claims that language reveals identity, each particular discourse developing from a shared language to explain the particulars of our own human experience. He then defends the use and complex nature of a chosen discourse, particularly Black English. In particular, Baldwin claims that "[L]anguage is the most vivid and crucial key to identity: It reveals the private identity, and connects one with, or divorces one from, the larger, public, or communal identity" (623). This passage illustrates how language helps us know who we are while also revealing our relationship to the world around us. Language deepens our sense of identity. Our choice of expression, our discourse, helps us identify with the world around us, helps us find our sense of self.

We value speech as a culture. From our cultural source, Greek and Roman rhetoric were upheld. Still today, the cultural norm is to be very Eurocentric in our speech. Even great orators such as Martin Luther King, Jr. who is revered and his speech examined and imitated, had to standardize his discourse, especially

when speaking to a diverse audience. We harshly judge public speakers who don't follow the norms, who show signs of nervousness, or unintentionally use non-standardized language. Our own vice president was continually lampooned for his speech errors.

Where does this judgment, this linguistic prejudice, come from? From our Eurocentric standard of language, making standardized speech a societal expectation? Are we ethnocentrically conditioned to see only the value of standardized discourse? Even Fredrick Douglass, a former slave, encourages the importance of speech in his essay, "Learning to Read and Write," saying, "The slave was made to say some very smart as well as impressive things in reply to his master—things which had the desired effect; for the conversation resulted in the voluntary emancipation of the slave on the part of the master" (73). This quote emphasizes our cultural beliefs regarding language, specifically that our use of it is equal with freedom or bondage. Douglass's essay encapsulates the relationship between language and freedom, illustrating that learning to read and write was a necessary step in his gaining not only physical, but also emotional and intellectual freedom from slavery.

What sort of bondage sometimes results when we don't know the rules, when we don't use the standard discourse? Amy Tan discusses the relationship between language and bondage in her essay, "Mother Tongue." In fact, she admits to feeling some prejudice herself about her immigrant mother's speech.

[W]hen I was growing up, my mother's "limited" English limited my perception of her. I was ashamed of her English. I believed that her English reflected the quality of what she had to say. That is, because she expressed them imperfectly, her thoughts were imperfect. And I had plenty of empirical evidence to support me: the fact that people in department stores, at banks, and at restaurants did not take her seriously, did not give her good service, pretended not to understand her, or even acted as if they didn't hear her. (Tan 79)

Tan is showing in this passage that we not only apply such linguistic prejudice against those we consider "others," but also against our own family. Tan's perception of her mother was influenced by her mother's speech. Was Tan born with this linguistic prejudice, her natural survival instincts showing her that such speech wouldn't be advantageous? Or was Tan's linguistic prejudice a societal conditioning? Was Tan's shame for her mother a result of people enforcing norms of discourse, and therefore Tan's desire to fit in with her peers overcame her value of her mother? Did our Eurocentric norms and value of language create this linguistic prejudice within Tan?

In addition, George Orwell, in his essay "Politics and the English Language," reveals other types of bondage that could occur when non-standardized language is used. He is particularly concerned about the influence of political jargon, claiming that "the slovenliness of our language makes it easier for us to have foolish thoughts" (626). This quote illustrates Orwell's fear that non-standardized language usage will result in the bondage of thoughts. In essence, Orwell is concerned that if language isn't reformed and regulated, then bondage, political and societal, to foolish thoughts and policies is bound to occur.

Should we then follow a prescriptive view of language? Should we regulate discourse so that such types of bondage can be prevented? Or does this regulation, this standardization itself create the bondage? According to Baldwin, "(...) the rules of the language are dictated by what the language must convey" (624). This excerpt reveals Baldwin's belief that language will monitor itself, and that people shouldn't try to regulate it or confine it to a particular discourse (i.e. standardized English versus Black English). In particular, Baldwin believes that forcing someone to not use their own discourse is "(...) demand[ing], essentially, (...) that the child repudiate his experience, and all that gives him sustenance, and enter a limbo in which he will no longer be black, and in which he knows that he can never become white" (624). This passage identifies the power of language, suggesting that those who choose what discourse may be used have the power to regulate what identities may be expressed.

Who then has the right to determine what rules should bind language? Who has the right to determine what linguistic

discourse will set you free? Enforcing a standardized discourse, such as Standardized English, creates hegemony. Accepting a standard requires giving those who use the standardized discourse a dominant power position over those who do not. In essence, having a standard means denying the identity and freedoms of another who doesn't use that language, that discourse. Thus, to create a linguistic standard is to produce the very bondage that people were trying to avoid in the first place.

What should we then believe about language? How should we go about determining which standards are acceptable or which aren't? Do we want to make such judgments anyway? Today, we hope to educate ourselves out of prejudice of all kinds. In this effort to accept others, people are taking it one step further and starting to claim we're all alike, that we shouldn't see the differences and that seeing differences is being prejudiced.

Andrew Sullivan challenges the notion that education will eradicate the prejudice out of us in his essay, "What is So Bad about Hate?" He claims that "It is one of the most foolish clichés of our time that prejudice is always rooted in ignorance, and can usually be overcome by familiarity with the objects of our loathing" (670). This excerpt is essential in challenging our current view that education or exposure will prevent our prejudice. For example, Tan's exposure to her mother's discourse didn't make her less linguistically prejudiced. Thus, if we agree with Sullivan, then education won't be enough. We need to instead, as he says, have "a human acceptance of our need for differentiation, without a total capitulation to it" (678). This line illustrates our innate need to recognize our differences. Accepting that we will always see our differences can then be the first step towards acceptance of others.

Multiculturalism is taught in our schools, so that we can accept others as they are, as they differ from us. In addition, multicultural linguistics has also developed, a pedagogy showing us how to adapt to other people's languages, how to not make universal assumptions about cultural norms of proper behavior regarding nonverbal behaviors, etc. If we can recognize our differences, linguistically and otherwise, and yet still not choose to provide one discourse with more power, then everyone has a right to their voice. By accepting our linguistic variances, we recognize the integral relationship between a person's identity and their

language. Thus, everyone has the right to their own discourse, endowing them with freedom of expression, of thought, of self. If it is possible to do these things, we just might change the politics of language into an example of the politics of acceptance.



Hannah Hathaway
Evolution
Linocut, 5" x 7"

For Better or For Worse

Nina Talbot

The music starts, the doors open and they enter the room. She is a beautiful, tall Russian girl in a long, white wedding dress. He is a short Japanese man, wearing an ill-fitting suit and tie. She smiles radiantly, looking like a fairy princess. Meanwhile, the groom looks around nervously, fidgeting with the buttons on the jacket. The couple stops in the middle of the room, faces me and I begin the wedding ceremony. As I talk, an interpreter translates quietly to the groom. I pronounce them a husband and a wife; they kiss, exchange rings, turn and march from the room to the cheers of their friends. This is not the end of a fairytale; this is just a beginning of a new story. Multicultural marriage: What is it?

I have seen many couples like this one. During the six years that I worked at the marriage registration office in Russia, I married hundreds of couples. I never grew tired of seeing the strange pairings: old bride, young groom; fat groom, skinny bride; deaf bride, blind groom. But of all the challenges faced by newlyweds, I thought none would be greater than that of the international marriage. In addition to the normal problems that a couple must confront, the international couple must come to terms with different languages, different customs and different cultures. I was always curious how such couples would cope.

Then I met an American man. It was summertime, and I was volunteering as a counselor at a summer camp on the coast just outside of town. One day the camp director introduced me to a handsome young American guy who was in Russia on business. The camp director had invited him to spend a few days at the camp to enjoy the ocean. They had met in the US some years before during a sailing regatta. I was probably a little shy at first when we first met, because I knew my English needed a lot of practice. But then he started talking to me in Russian. I was shocked; very few foreigners learn Russian, and certainly not Americans!

Over the next few days I began to notice that he was showing me a lot of attention, inviting me to go sailing or walking on

the beach. When he left to return to the US, we kept in touch by phone and letters. Whenever he came to Russia, we would spend as much time together as we could. He also took me on several vacations outside of Russia so I could start to see the world. By the fifth year of our relationship, we both decided that we were simply tired of being so far apart. During our trip to Mexico, he proposed to me on a romantic moonlit beach, and within a few short months we were married and living in his hometown of Bellingham.

Like most newlyweds, we had some difficulties adapting to each other. Our cultural differences were great, and even though my husband is very familiar with my native culture, misunderstandings often arose. The one issue that we still disagree about most is what is considered good or bad taste. When I came to the U.S., I wanted things that were expensive and looked like it. My husband had to make me understand what was in good taste and what was considered to be vulgar. For example, I liked large and fancy restaurants and he preferred small and intimate ones; I liked to stay in five star hotels and he preferred less well-known and not too "touristy" places. Because of these differences we sometimes disagreed about a hotel or restaurant. Currently we are looking for a new house and we are trying to find a compromise in our different tastes. In Russia, I lived in a small apartment all my life; now I want to have a larger house with a big backyard. However, my husband's dream is the opposite. He criticizes big houses, large furniture and expansive yards—this is what he thinks is unattractive. He would be happy to have a tiny apartment in the downtown of some large city like Seattle or New York, or even to build a Japanese-style house with its clean and minimal look.

Another challenging aspect of multicultural marriage is language. For us, this is less of a problem because my husband speaks my native language, Russian, almost fluently, and my English is getting better every day. We understand each other verbally very well; at home we speak Russian, but we can always switch to English if something is unclear. Not so among the other Russian-American couples I know. In those cases, the Russian wives are always responsible for communicating in English since none of their husbands speak a single word of Russian. This often leads to funny, and sometimes more serious, misunderstandings: for example, I remember when my Russian friend and her American husband were

moving heavy pieces of furniture in their house. Every time he would say "to the left," she would move to the right and the other way around. She got very upset because she couldn't remember the difference between "to the left" or "to the right" in English.

Yet another difficulty for international pairs is the differences in expectations of the roles of the husband and wife in the marriage. In Russia, for example, the husband is often less involved in the day-to-day work of the household and his main responsibility is to earn money for supporting the family. The Russian wife is responsible for cooking meals three times a day, taking care of children and doing everyday household chores. Growing up in Russia, I have never seen my father doing any kind of household chores, such as doing the dishes or cleaning the house. In addition to housework, wives in Russia usually have jobs too, but Russian women do not accept the need for women to do everything men do and many Russian women still dream of staying home, being housewives and mothers, and being cared for by a strong and competent man. Some of my Russian girlfriends, married to Americans, wanted to realize their dreams to be housewives, and were disappointed by the fact that they had to work too.

Despite all these difficulties, multicultural marriage can be interesting and rewarding. International couples can learn each other's language and enjoy both cultures, but sometimes what is considered to be normal in one culture, may not be good in another. Therefore, international couples need to communicate carefully with each other and try not to hurt their spouse's feelings. In addition, it is important for both partners to understand and respect the aspects of each other's cultural customs and traditions. I learned from my own experience that multicultural marriage is not so different than marriages between people with the same backgrounds. Strong partnership should be built on patience, compromise, humor and love; these are the most important characteristics of any successful marriage, not only of international couples.

Eighteen and Counting

Diane Wood

That which does not kill us, makes us stronger.

—Steel Magnolias

There was a time when I felt I'd spent my whole life being married. The only exception was the years leading up to my eighteenth birthday, all of which I felt were average and boring. I'd been craving more in my life than an *average and boring* existence. My mind was screaming at my eighteen-year-old body to get me out of that humdrum life and into an exciting life of independence and freedom. So what did I do? I eloped with my highschool sweetheart. That on-again, off-again relationship ended after only three years, having produced two things of value—my son and my daughter. I was married and divorced two more times over the next sixteen years. Then something came about in the winter of my thirty-seventh year that would change me and my life, forever.

A shift in my attitude began to emerge after I was hired as a counselor for The Domestic Violence Prevention Center (DVPC) in Colorado Springs. I began to experience the world a little—well, actually, a lot—differently. I came to realize through their Domestic Violence training that what I'd experienced in two of my marriages was abuse, abuse with a capital "A." This was a monumental epiphany for me. I came to see that I was one of "them," one of *those* women, those *victims of domestic violence*. No one pointed it out to me; I saw myself in their examples. At that time society was clueless about domestic violence, spousal abuse, violent relationships, or whatever terms are being used to describe it currently. I never admitted the truth to anyone about my black eyes, bruises and swollen lips. No one ever knew about the miscarriage I'd suffered. Heck, my first attack from husband number one happened on our wedding night. The next morning, over a cup of instant coffee, my new mother-in-law looked at my split lip and said, "Well, you're married now, Mija; you're going to have to learn to take it." The irony? There I was, working for a domestic violence

program and surreptitiously still hoping for the *right* Mr. Right to come to my rescue. Fortunately, my intuition kept nudging me to soak up everything I could learn in this new world of mine.

During my first spring at DVPC I was chosen by one of Colorado Springs' foremost therapists to collaborate on a project. We were going to be developing weekend workshops for battered women that would begin that fall. Since I'd always dreamed of being a psychologist, this was a definite coup for me. Sandra became my mentor, my idol; I hung on every nugget of wisdom she imparted. However, I possessed lingering self-esteem issues inherent to survivors of domestic violence.

I saw her as being *so* together, and everything I wasn't, including being a thin, socially conscious vegetarian. She had long straight hair, compared to my short, frizzy natural curl. I wore eye make-up; she wore an *au naturelle* face. I had a mere high school diploma; she was successful psychologist. But in spite of my enormous insecurities, Sandra and I became colleagues that summer.

During one of our first dinner meetings we eventually got around to talking about our personal lives. I heard Sandra saying, "...and since that time, I've declared a five-year moratorium on relationships." Stunned, I knew she could see my mental gymnastics as, in a split second, I tried to imagine living without a primary relationship for a few months, or a whole season. And for what earthly reason? I thought, "Wow, she truly *is* a goddess."

I said something profound like, "Oh my God! I could never deliberately do that!"

She grinned. "You'd be surprised."

The seed was planted. In my myopic mind, her suggestion was akin to asking me to join a convent. But, fortunately, something else also happened at that moment. This wise woman had presented me with a choice. My long-held belief about men and women's roles in relationships had already been undergoing a metamorphosis. I realized that falling into another relationship at that time would be a dangerous choice for me. On days when my emotional health was peaking, I could look at my self-destructive pattern of relationship addiction. Slipping into this new me, I wasn't exactly open about my latest undertaking. I still wasn't convinced I could pull it off. On one hand I truly believed that no other woman

could have ever been as defective as I'd been in the search for The Prince. On the other hand, under the surface, I was still feeling incomplete without one.

During our next meeting, because of my curiosity, Sandra and I talked in more detail about her choice for relationship abstinence. I felt lightheaded; a kind of swirly, translucent, hollow-bodied feeling came over me. What I didn't know at the time, this hard-to-describe feeling takes over whenever I'm faced with a life-altering challenge. I now know to abandon resistance, and surrender to the journey. But, sitting there in Adams Mountain Café in Manitou Springs, I was completely unaware of my process. Even though the idea of abstinence sounded intriguing to me, I balked. Sandra, who had no investment in whether or not I joined her in this mission, gently nudged one end of my teeter-totter with, "You can always start out small, and recommit as you go. I'm getting ready to recommit in November, but I'm not sure for how long."

"Maybe I'll try it for a month," I said.

"No trying, only commitment," she smiled.

So on May 16, 1983, my "Great Moratorium" was launched. I literally marked off the days on a calendar, looking forward to sharing this unprecedented success with all my cool, new advocate girlfriends. When that day finally arrived, what I realized was that it wasn't so bad to not be obsessed with having a date for the weekend. What did I do instead? Well, I spent time with my daughter watching scary movies on our new-fangled VCR. Occasionally, I'd have dinner with a friend, a *girl* friend. I explored spirituality, and began practicing Buddhism. I began enjoying *my own* company, and began journaling my experience. I taught myself gourmet cooking, specializing in Asian cuisines—Thai, Chinese, Korean, and Japanese, whatever sounded exotic and fun. I even made health food for my kitties out of liver, nettles and rice; they loved it.

After that first month had passed, I re-enlisted in a two-month stretch, just to test my own resolve. Looking around my little mother-in-law's cottage I realized that a lot of my personal possessions carried unhappy, and sometimes fearful, memories. All that stuff was from relationships I tried not to think about anymore. On impulse I gave it to the women at the shelter. Next came the process of finding out what I liked, and what I didn't like. It sounds

strange to say, but I didn't always know right away. Colors like plum, black, and white called to me. The textures of 100% cotton, real wood, and cool, natural stone soothed my soul. I found my spirit moving to the Blues and good old Rock 'n Roll. Sometimes I would put Etta James on the stereo and dance to my heart's content.

The next two months passed in a blink. Thriving in freedom and self-discovery, I overcame the debilitating, irrational insecurity of being out in public alone. Like so many others of my generation, we'd been indoctrinated by a world that worshipped coupledness. The first time I'd felt adventurous enough to go to a movie alone, I chose to go in the early evening because more people would be there, and I wouldn't be so obviously—*by myself*. I worked up the courage, me—a woman alone—to sit down in the middle of the theater. I just knew that every couple in the theater was looking at me and judging this poor, solitary woman. Being content alone was something I constantly needed to justify to friends and family, and for a time, to myself as well. It took practice.

There were days when I thought, if I start crying, it'll consume me. But instead of stopping my tears, I gave myself permission to acknowledge my sorrow, and allow the deep sobbing to come. The grieving helped to release me from my addiction, and fear of walking through life alone.

Six more months passed; I felt my old skins slipping away. I took ownership of my life, my Self, something I'd never experienced before. *This was my life and I was in charge!* Could I possibly make it *another* six months without a relationship? I was beginning to scare myself. But, just how long was this experiment of mine going to last? What if this meant I'd never have another relationship? Really..... what if?

More than anything, I loved not having to answer to anyone else. My grown son was sharing an apartment with some buddies. My grown daughter still lived with me, but we hardly saw each other, mostly in passing. It all felt so odd, but it was such a very good odd. I could have popcorn for dinner and peanut butter toast for breakfast if I felt like it. When someone would ask me, "Don't you miss it?" I'd tell them the only thing I could think of that I missed was when someone else paid for a night out. No one was more surprised than I was when I'd actually done this moratorium thing for a whole year. But, even more amazing was when I made

the choice to commit to another year, just for the hell of it. If Ms. Sandra could do it, why couldn't I? I'd already made it through the hard part.

There I was, May of 1986, my fortieth birthday rapidly approaching, and me with no relationship on the horizon. Oddly enough, I felt like I'd grown invisible blinders; I never even noticed the opposite sex any more. I'd been living this lifestyle for almost three years at that point. Occasionally I'd still wonder where it would all end. I felt a tweak of concern knowing I had a major transitional birthday approaching, and I was still doing this curious *alone* thing. But, reflecting on the *epic* strides I'd made in my lifestyle, my heart and my mind during those three years, I couldn't deny this process was fundamentally changing me. It impacted every corner of my being. I was doing very well in my job as the manager of the Victim Advocacy Program. I began really understanding what had attracted me to unhealthy relationships. Most importantly, I realized I could survive emotionally and physically on my own; and it was okay.

Coming to grips with the fact that I hadn't been the only one affected by my relationship choices, I focused my new understanding on cultivating my relationships with my kids. This experience humbled me; I was awed by who they'd grown into in spite of it all. Overwhelmed with gratitude that our relationships had somehow managed to survive the storms, I was committed to never putting them in jeopardy again. I began to appreciate uncovering the inner strength that comes from meeting a challenge head on, and overcoming the obstacles. Soon I was discovering even more things about myself that I'd never known before, when my focus had always been on the other half of my relationship, and on the dream of the perfect family. Keeping up those appearances was an exhausting illusion that kept my children and me trapped in a dangerous house of cards. Releasing the tenuous façade of "Home Sweet Home" allowed us to start living. The moratorium continued.

So this became my unique lifestyle of choice, and as each year passed and May approached, I would re-commit in full consciousness. I thought about how my first eighteen years had been spent living with my parents, in a life where I was told what to do, what to think, what to say, and what to feel. The next eighteen years I spent with husbands, who turned out to be even more controlling than my parents. I mused over a new possibility—creating

a brand new goal to spend eighteen years on this amazing journey I'd begun. It had begun to grow on me. It's difficult to remember at which juncture this choice just became my way of being, without a need for constant, daily self-analysis. One day I realized I was no longer pondering what was wrong with me on the basis that I would keep choosing to remain alone.

When my fiftieth birthday finally rolled around, I was firmly rooted in my "Great Moratorium." The only time I ever thought about it was when May approached. This was my life, my wonderful, full, crazy, challenging life. In fact, the only time I'd ever even noticed that I was unusual was when someone would make a comment like, "Gee, I've never even known you with a relationship in your life. I have no idea what your taste in men is like." Neither did I, but I'm certain it's much different than before I started down this path. Frankly, everyone else always seemed more concerned about it than I was. Each and every May I celebrate, happier and healthier than ever. Each year evolved better than the one before it.

Now five more years have passed, and at the age of fifty-five, I find myself reflecting on the impact of that one getting-to-know-you conversation with Sandra, in what seems like a lifetime ago. The Great Moratorium has certainly impacted who I am and my view of the world as I navigate through the chapters of my life. I feel as if everything I did before May 16, 1983, I did in someone else's skin. I have photographs of myself from that other life, but I don't recognize that person. When I try to imagine where I'd be had Sandra not inspired me, the page is blank. Eighteen years into the journey, I'm still wearing plum, black and white. Every single day brings with it brand new opportunities to reinvent my life. Each morning when I get up and look in the mirror, I wonder, "What am I going to learn about myself, and my life, today?" The possibilities are truly infinite.



Monica Pinney
Faking It
Mixed media, 12" x 20"

Who Is the Real Beast?

Lale Santelices

Everybody loves Disney movies. When I was a little girl, my parents thought that it was better for me to watch Disney movies than movies from any other company, for Disney's kid-focus is well known. Naturally, my parents trusted that fact and never really questioned these movies' values or messages, for they remember Disney movies when they were young and found them to be wonderful. After I saw some of these movies again, I was alarmed to notice the underlying messages that kids have been spoon fed by the Disney Corporation (and Hollywood) over the years. To my surprise, I am not the only one who shares this belief. Writer and Hollywood critic Michael Parenti addresses this issue in his essay "Class and Virtue," in which he explains how Hollywood conditions their viewers to favor the upper social classes. Parenti explains that Hollywood makes believe that lower classes are "...less desirable and less moral than other people," and "[s]ometimes class bigotry is interwoven with gender bigotry" (373-5). We can observe this class and gender bigotry that is being assimilated by our unconscious in Disney's 1991 animated film *Beauty and the Beast*.

Disney's *Beauty and the Beast* is a fairy tale about an enchanted castle with an enchanted prince who learns how to love with the help of a beautiful, educated, but simple village girl named Belle, Belle meaning beauty. The movie begins with the prince becoming a horrible beast. The prince is punished for being selfish and superficial through a spell cast by an Enchantress. The spell can only be broken when the Beast falls in love with a girl, but the girl must love him back. On the other hand, Belle lives an ordinary life in an equally ordinary village and is constantly harassed by a rough, uneducated, but exceedingly popular man in town named Gaston. She dislikes Gaston, and dismisses every attempt he makes to marry her. However, he will not stop bothering her.

One day, Belle meets the Beast while trying to save her father. The Beast has Belle's father incarcerated for trespassing while he was looking for help after being attacked by wolves.

Because Belle's father is old and sick, Belle decides to sacrifice herself by staying in the castle forever in exchange for her father's freedom. The Beast recognizes that she is beautiful like no other girl, and even though he is not sure he can make Belle fall in love with him, the Beast knows that she has all he needs (beauty) to fall in love. The Beast is also very aware that she is his last chance to be freed from the spell. The Beast's intentions toward Belle are evident in the movie shortly after he leaves her in her new room and goes to the dining-room where he is advised by some of the servants on how to make Belle fall in love with him. In this scene, we can also see the Beast's nervousness and insecurity about the possibility of Belle falling in love with him, for he hopelessly mentions the difference between them, which is beauty. Belle and the Beast spend several magical days together and, despite the fact that he is a hideous looking beast, they fall in love, thus breaking the spell.

Beauty and the Beast is a perfect example of Parenti's observations of gender bigotry in Hollywood. When the Beast locks up Belle's father, he puts him in the tower, with no regards for his health. However, because of Belle's beauty, instead of locking her in the tower the Beast takes her to a beautiful, warm and cozy room. Why? Because Belle is beautiful and that is all the Beast needs to fall in love. Later that day, Belle is scared by the Beast and runs away from the castle. She doesn't get too far when she encounters the same pack of wolves that her father encountered earlier, so the Beast rescues her from the wolves and suddenly, "puff," the magic begins. Several days of observing Belle's beauty and angelic appearance as well as the Beast's lovely castle and change in temper, is just about all they need to fall in love, break the spell, and get rid of Gaston. The Beast is transformed into an adorable creature, and Belle forgets about the Beast's earlier behaviors (i.e. the growling, the furniture breaking, the imprisonment of Belle's old, sick father for no good reason resulting in her own imprisonment, etc.). Nevertheless the audience accepts this situation. So the moral of the story reflects Parenti's observation: "A woman can escape from economic and gender exploitation by winning the love of... a rich [prince]" (376). In other words, if the prince (Beast) hadn't rescued Belle, she would have been doomed to live her simple life with no chance for true adventure or independence. Belle would

have been left in her small and boring town where no one understood her, while at the same time being constantly harassed by Gaston.

The difference between Beast (before he transforms into a refined, handsome and rich prince) and Gaston also supports Parenti's idea of class bigotry. If we compare both of these characters, we can observe the same type of discourtesy and overall unkindness. Neither the Beast nor Gaston are well spoken. They both possess an uncontrollable temper, which frequently leads to violent acts of rage. They are both very shallow and self-centered, and they are simply mean to weaker people. So why do we like the Beast better than Gaston? Because at the end of the story, the Beast is transformed into an attractive prince. Therefore, he becomes gentler, and well spoken, and his uncontrollable anger disappears without a trace (acknowledging the fact that we have seen behavioral changes of his "falling in love" with Belle). He becomes charming and perfect as soon as he is changed into a drop-dead-gorgeous prince.

In contrast, even if he hadn't been killed, Gaston still could not have become a prince. Therefore, his abrasive speech could not have changed and his manners could not have improved either, for these kinds of qualities belong only to the ruling classes (Parenti 374). This is why the audience dislikes Gaston and is relieved, even happy, after his death, for he cannot bother Belle anymore. The Beast, on the contrary, is the enchanted prince, so the audience adores him, forgiving and forgetting his earlier behavior without any question. The prince, unlike Gaston, has the royal right to be "the good guy" and end up happily ever after with the princess. Parenti makes similar observations about class depiction in film, for he states: "[v]irtue is usually measured by one's approximation to proper class appearances" (374). In other words, class defines our behavior.

In *Beauty and the Beast*, we can also find evidence of Parenti's theory of gender bigotry. In the scene where the villagers, lead by Gaston, come to the castle and try to kill the Beast, the Beast is deeply depressed due to Belle's absence—after falling in love with Belle, the Beast let her go because her father was sick and she was afraid he would die without her—and refuses to protect the castle. In the final scene between Gaston and the Beast, Gaston

attacks the Beast but the Beast doesn't defend himself or the castle. At a certain point of the fight, the Beast finally takes control of the situation by grabbing Gaston by the neck, but instead of killing him he lets him go and embraces Belle. "The bad [Beast] is transformed into the Good [Beast]" (Parenti 375). Because of Belle's earlier influence, the Beast doesn't kill or incarcerate anymore. He has changed. So Belle, the intelligent girl who likes to read and wants independence and adventures in her life, isn't that vital anymore because one of her jobs is complete: the Beast has learned to be good. Now Belle has only one duty left: she must fall in love with the Beast in order to make him whole.

If we go even further with Parenti's theory, we are able to find a great deal of hidden gender bigotry in the relationship between Belle and the Beast. It is hidden gender bigotry because, at first look, it appears that the Beast depends on Belle to save his life. In this last scene between Gaston and the Beast, as the Beast turns to embrace Belle, Gaston stabs him and gives him a mortal wound. After being stabbed, the Beast accidentally pushes Gaston, sending him to his doom. Then the Beast falls to the floor and slowly dies until Belle comes in and saves him by saying, "I love you," breaking the spell and transforming the Beast and the castle's servants into humans again. This scene appears to show power and importance from Belle's character, for she rescues the Beast. In reality, what this scene shows is that Belle's power can only be passive because she is a woman; therefore, she can only protect the Beast by attending to his needs as nurturer. The weaker sex cannot fight evil—in this case Gaston—and save the day with her hands, for she is gentle. Instead, Belle's job, announced by the Enchantress at the beginning of the movie, is to stay back and help the Beast become human again by doing all a girl is able to do, love. These kinds of messages show us once again that gender bigotry in Hollywood is present even if disguised behind what appear to be "good actions."

Parenti explains how Hollywood portrays women and lower classes as inferior to the ruling class. Taking a closer look at Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*, one is able to identify most of Parenti's ideas—even if they are hidden behind characters' actions—of how people are deemed better if they belong to the right class, white, rich males. Because Parenti's ideas are evident in

most, if not all, of Disney's fairy tale movies, parents and society aid Hollywood in teaching children that the upper class is superior and that gender bigotry is acceptable. Unfortunately, we can observe how most viewers don't really question the content of these kinds of movies. Instead, they are happy to know and anticipate that the "bad guy" dies, the prince marries the princess and they live happily ever after. Parenti's theory helps us recognize sexism and class equality issues that have been recorded by Hollywood and Disney in our unconscious since our childhood.

“Manus”

Gibb Jordan Fletcher

I have chosen to give my response on the art object, a sculpture on the Western Washington University campus known as the “Manus.” “Manus” was created in 1994 by Magdalena Abakanowics. I have observed this sculpture for many years as I went to Western’s Carver Gym to play basketball. It has always brought about a sense of wonder and feelings of fantasy.

I am a long time reader and fan of Tolkien, the famous author who is the writer of *The Lord of the Rings*. When I pass by this sculpture, I am transported into Tolkien’s magical world. In Tolkien’s second book, *The Two Towers*, Merry and Pippin, two small Halflings (3-to-4-foot-tall humans) wander into a fantastical, ancient forest called, Fanghorn. Fanghorn is inhabited by Ents, which are trees that walk, speak and move like men, and have great knowledge. They are protectors of the forest and are know as tree herders. There is one Ent in particular known as Treebeard.

The fantasy that the “Manus” used to always inspire for me as I observed it on my weekly trips to the gym was of an ancient Ent, Treebeard, perhaps still alive, but after eons his form now gone hard as stone, petrified from endless ages of walking the quiet woods of Middle Earth through the third age of time and into our age forever. In present time he is herding his magical trees with his fellow tree herders faithfully protecting the trees from the Orcs of development and progress. In my mind, he has found refuge on Sehome Hill.

“Manus” also inspired visions of an Ent army marching on Bellingham, shaking the earth. The great tree herder “Manus” (Treebeard) gathers his forest on Sehome Hill and sends it in on one last epic battle for Middle Earth against the waves of development and the pollution now entering Bellingham. I see this as the Ents’ last stand against axe, chainsaw, stench of smokestacks and the bitter taste of fouled water of what was once so pure in ages past. Like a mother goddess of enchanted times,

the “Manus” would purge the imbalances in an epic battle right here in Bellingham.

“Manus” also inspired a vision of a large cocoon used by a wizard to traverse great amounts of time. When I drove by in my car I would imagine a wizard, wrapped tightly like a mummy, glowing in the dark trunk of the sculpture, quietly waiting for the correct time to come out of the cocoon and enter into our world. Perhaps it is Gandalf the White or Merlin in a sleepless state of consciousness inside “Manus,” watching over us, the people of the third age, and on throughout eternity in all the ages of man to come. Like Magdalena Abakanowics’s goal to reach humanity by putting “Manus” not only next to the woods but also close to human activity, the cocooned immortals are part of the natural world but also very much a part of the world of men throughout the ages.

Abakanowics’s “Manus” is in a series of sculptures called “Hand like Trees”, which bridges the gap between the form of nature and the human form. I think that my vision of Ents “treemen,” is very much a vision of what this art work is trying to reflect to the public. It is a natural conclusion that the eye will find human form hidden in the natural form. We are ourselves all connected through the natural world. A deep respect and observation of nature is very evident in Abakanowics’s work. There are a lot of natural forms and human-like qualities to be found in the “Manus.” It is very much a merging and blending of human and natural forms to create a unique form with familiar shapes. Human form and natural form, like the limbs of a human and the branches of a tree, are brought together in “Manus” to form an almost alive feeling to the art. It looks like it has been alive to me, and in my vision, it even walked on Sehome Hill.

This art work truly uses nature to cause humans to think of themselves in the modern world and the natural world in a new and creative way. It inspired in me memories of books I had read as a child and enabled me to merge these memories with modern ideas of man’s struggle against pollution and deforestation. I merged these memories not only on a modern level, but also on a fantastical level with my vision of the “Manus” as an Ent leading the last stand of nature against human imbalances. It is my deepest hope that Abakanowics’s work will bring about the awareness of how nature and man are connected here in Bellingham, our special part of the

world. "Manus" reminds us that we are a part, not the center, of the natural world.

About a Boy: A Deconstructionist View of “Birches”

Sarah Wilson

When I first read Robert Frost’s poem, “Birches,” I thought it was just a nice, little poem about a man wanting to be a child again, free of adult responsibilities. In the poem, the speaker notices the bending birches, and imagines that a boy is bending them in fun. But he remembers that only natural physical forces can really bend trees. However, he returns to the image of the boy playing in the trees and wishes he could be a boy again, playing in the trees. Again, it appeared to be just a pleasant poem about wanting to be a kid again. Then I noticed the opposites set up in the poem: play/responsibility, alone/together, truth/fiction, and earth/heaven. These opposite pairs make one seem better than the other. A deconstructionist view of the opposites contained in this poem could reveal that the underlying assumptions about these opposites are not really so set in stone after all. In fact, Frost himself sets up a deconstructionist vein throughout the entire poem, setting up binary pairs, then sometimes not really settling down to any resolution as to which is better. He challenges society’s views about these opposites through deconstructive means of his own.

The binary pair of responsibility versus play is heavily used throughout the poem. Even at the very beginning, the speaker likes to imagine a boy playing, but then his own sense of responsibility sets in, forcing him to remember the reality of what really causes the trees to bend. However, he returns to the image of the boy playing. The boy is all about having fun with the trees, even in the midst of his responsibility: “As he went out and in to fetch the cows” (Frost 647). Even though our society values responsibility above playfulness, Frost seems to saying that play is better—who, after all, doesn’t sometimes want to be a kid again, to have fun? In the second half of the poem, the speaker is struggling with wanting to be a child again with the benefits of being an adult. He says that “Earth’s the right place for love” (Frost 648). He is struggling with

what society says is preferable and what he really wants to do. The speaker realizes that society itself has set up this binary pair of responsibility versus play, and seems to come to the same conclusion as his society, at first glance. But in the last line, he reveals how he really feels about the whole thing: "One could do worse than be a swinger of birches" (Frost 648). The speaker is saying that to play and have fun is in fact better than being bound to responsibility all the time. He turns society's views upside down with this last statement.

Truth versus fiction is another theme that is addressed in "Birches." The speaker struggles with this in the very beginning. He wants to imagine the boy is bending the birches in fun, but then he remembers that only natural forces like storms can bend trees. He does, however, realize the effect of reality on imagination—"But I was going to say when Truth broke in/ With all her matter of fact about the ice storm" (Frost 647). In this line, the speaker breaks up his own binary pair that he established in the beginning, acknowledging that reality makes more sense than imagination. He does a little deconstruction of his own—this imagined fancy of a boy bending trees does have merit and is not to be disregarded, merely because it is not as factual as the explanation of an ice storm.

The speaker also sets up the opposites of heaven and earth. By climbing trees, one would suppose that one is nearer to heaven. The speaker sees this imaginary boy as being closer to heaven, and would like to be closer as well. He recounts the troubles and pain of being on earth, relating it to being below the tops of the trees: "Life is too much like a pathless wood/Where your face burns and tickles with the cobwebs" (Frost 648). Being below is painful; the trees are not as friendly as they are when being climbed and subdued. By being closer to heaven, the speaker appears to be saying that he could be above the troubles of earth. He also says, however, that he would like to be able to come and go as he pleases: "I'd like to get away from earth awhile/ And then come back to it and begin over" (Frost 648). But he eventually comes to the conclusion that earth, no matter what its faults, is the best place to be: "I don't know where it's likely to go better" (Frost 648). Society would tell us the same thing too, telling us to forget our true desires, and be content with what earth has to offer. But

the same effect that the final line has on the binaries of play versus responsibility, it also has on this binary pair. The concession, almost reluctant in tone, acknowledges that being above and being able to swing birches, is pretty close to heaven.

Being alone versus playing together is also mentioned in this poem. What is interesting is the fact that the boy is alone because he has no other choice—he lives in the country, away from other boys. The other boys play baseball, a game which by its very nature requires more than one player. But by being alone, the boy of the speaker's imagination is forced to come up with his own games. The speaker does not explicitly say which is better. It can be assumed, however, that he prefers the boy to be alone; otherwise, he would be playing baseball with the other boys and not bending down the trees for the speaker's flight of fancy. Yet, solitude is a not characteristic highly valued in our society. By pointing out the benefits of solitude, the speaker wants us to be aware that solitude is a healthy activity.

The last binary pair I want to point out is that of freedom versus rules. This also ties in with the last pair. By being alone, the boy is free to play his own games. The speaker obviously envies the freedom to climb about in trees and be nearer to heaven. Even the game of baseball requires rules, and the boy is not tied to them. Our society values both, but the speaker is putting freedom on a higher level than rules. To him, rules keep him here on earth.

Frost relies on deconstruction to keep his poem together. Without it, he could not put these opposites together in the ways that he does. He uses these binaries to point out the opposites set up by our society, to question what it values as a whole. The theme of the boy having fun is also very deconstructive—deconstruction is also about fun. Frost recognizes that fun is sometimes more important than responsibility and rules. He sums it up beautifully in that last line—yes, responsibility is necessary, but it would be still be more fun to swing birches.

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Sara Young
Untitled
Charcoal, 24" x 18"

A New Age of Peacekeeping: A Critical Essay on American Terrorism

Nathaniel Holden

Throughout the history of the United States there have been countless acts labeled “terrorist” acts. While the people of America watch another war on the nightly news, they have entered into the very activity which makes terrorism possible within our own country. Media agencies have political agendas that frame the bounds of the discussion in mainstream culture and therefore frame the information presented to us in our own homes (Goffman 374). The way the media manipulates language with “doublespeak”—a phrase coined by George Orwell meaning deliberately obscure or ambiguous language—eats away our critical thinking abilities, and the symbols the networks show degrade our abilities to question the information they choose to give us. When a society loses the definitions of words and replaces them with media representations, it allows governments to incite violence and hide under a veil of obscured reality. Language is manipulated and minds are molded into complacent members of the highest budgeted terrorist group: the United States. While the state-run media reinforces the idea that terrorists are exclusively suicide bombers and fascist dictators, our government is committing the same atrocities they claim to be helping with so called “aid” to foreign countries. Whether it’s the bombings of Hiroshima or the Iran-Contra affair under Regan, the facts about state-sponsored terrorism are all around us. Through the testimonies of linguist professor Noam Chomsky and the well known political analyst Howard Zinn, we can learn how to analyze the way our foreign policy is framed through a more critical lens.

If you’re offended by my thesis, you’ve proven my point. People refer to ideas like “the peace process” and “terrorism” without engaging in the proper usage of the words. In fact, it’s become impossible for the United States to commit terrorist acts or

act in a way that would jeopardize the peace process. Chomsky illustrates this point in the book *Understanding Power*: "You can't have the United States opposing the peace process, because the peace process is what the United States is doing, by definition. And if anybody is opposing the United States, then they're opposing the peace process" (43). Here, Chomsky refers to the rhetoric we use to obscure the facts. When politicians refer to the peace process, they are simply discussing the interests of the United States. In reality, the United States has opposed the peace process on multiple occasions. One example of this is the United States' opposition to UN resolution 242, which called for the acknowledgement of the sovereignty and political independence of each state as well as the withdrawal of Israeli forces from occupied areas. Though every country had adopted the plan besides the United States and Israel, we still felt that somehow Middle Eastern peace was against our best interests. What seems to be in our best interests is a conflict-ridden Middle East to such a point that it becomes a stalemate between factions. The government feels that it can use this stalemate to its advantage by supplying weaponry and exploiting the oil resources in the surrounding areas.

Whenever a debate arises about foreign policy and terrorism I hear claims such as: "Listen, the United States has reasons for doing what it does; and terrorists don't." However, the people whom we brand "terrorists" have interests just as the United States does, they simply use different courses of action to fulfill the end they have in mind. According to The American Heritage Dictionary, terrorism is defined as: "The unlawful use or threatened use of force or violence by a person or an organized group against people or property with the intention of intimidating or coercing societies or governments, often for ideological or political reasons." If we deconstruct this definition, any use of force or violence with the intention of intimidating or coercing societies or governments is, in fact, terrorism.

The bombing of Hiroshima, for example, would fall under the definition of a terrorist activity. In the second meeting of the Target Committee in Los Alamos, they specifically outline psychological factors in using the bomb. The document reads: "It was agreed that psychological factors in the target selection were of great importance. Two aspects of this are (1) obtaining the greatest

psychological effect against Japan and (2) making the initial use sufficiently spectacular for the importance of the weapon to be internationally recognized when publicity on it is released.(2)”

Contrary to popular belief, the rules of war still applied in World War II, it's just that everyone seemingly ignored them. Under the rules of war it is illegal to target a civilian population but as the document above proves, the fact that it was an area with a highly concentrated population was a major factor in the decision to bomb Hiroshima.

The United States also hired terrorist factions in order to quell anti-capitalist revolutions. During the cold war, this manifested itself in the Iran-Contra affair. Howard Zinn, a political analyst, explains how perceived threats produce terrible outcomes on real democratic movements:

Reagan came into office just after a revolution had taken place in Nicaragua, in which a popular Sandinista movement overthrew the corrupt Somoza dynasty (long supported by the U.S.). The Sandinistas, a coalition of Marxists, left-wing priests, and assorted nationalists, set about to give more land to the peasants and to spread education and health care among the poor. The Regan administration, seeing in this a “communist” threat, but even more important, a challenge to the long U.S. control over governments in Central America, began immediately to work to overthrow the Sandinista government. (Zinn 585)

To overthrow the Sandinista movement, the U.S. hired a counterrevolutionary group referred to as the “contras.” Their methods were similar to the other anti-communist activities perpetrated by the United States Federal Government. During Edgar Chamorro's testimony before the world court, he stated “They killed mercilessly, kidnapped the leaders of the party and mutilated the remaining of all supporters.” In June of 1986 the World Court found the United States guilty of violating international law. After over 20,000 innocent men, women, and children were killed, the revolution was quelled. The Sandinistas buckled under U.S. pressure

and then lost the election of 1990. Jonathan Marshall, Peter Dale Scott, and Jane Hunter explain in *The Iran-Contra Connection*:

The first of these "deniable" partners was Argentina, whose military rulers had, since the mid- 1970s, unleashed an orgy of violence against their own civilian population in the course of stamping out a leftist guerrilla movement. Argentine agents had worked in Nicaragua even before Somoza's overthrow to help track down Argentine Montoneros guerrillas who had teamed up in exile with the Sandinistas; they also advised security forces and death squads in Guatemala and El Salvador. Now Argentina's military junta supplied as many as 100 veterans of its own dirty war against the left to train the first contras in urban terrorist tactics and guerrilla war. These were not just any contras: Argentina's protégés were all recruits from Somoza's brutal National Guard. Visits to Buenos Aires in 1981 by such Reagan administration emissaries as Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman General Edwin Meyer, Ambassador-at-Large Vernon Walters and UN Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick helped establish the alliance of the CIA and Argentine military in Central America. A November 1 meeting of CIA director William Casey and the American-trained leader of Argentina's military junta, Gen. Leopold Galtieri, cemented it.

(1)

It's quite simple to see what was really going on in Nicaragua through the lens of this quote. The CIA knowingly employed foreign militant groups known for the merciless slaughtering of their own civilian movements to end a potential communist threat. Though the United States didn't directly involve itself in the conflict, it hired mercenaries in order to crush Nicaragua's popular movement which coerced the people to vote for a certain political party. The United States, in effect, tailored the election to its own benefit by funding the assassinations of major Sandinista party members.

It's estimated that The United States government has also supplied over 85 billion dollars in aid to Israel since 1949. While people claim that the money is and always has been for "defensive purposes," this argument falls apart upon closer examination. Resolution 242 is a good example of how the United States uses Israel as a strategic ally in the Middle East. Noam Chomsky extrapolates: "The policy that won out was what he called "stalemate": keep things the way they are, maintain the system of Israeli oppression. And there was a good reason for that, it wasn't just out of the blue: having an embattled, militaristic Israel is an important part of how we rule the world"(144). It stands to reason that the United States would want a heavily armed Israel to control the vast oil resources in the Middle East, but what's this about Israeli oppression? If you've ever heard the phrase "Israeli settlements" on the news, you've been conned. The term "settlements" when speaking of the Middle East refer to former Palestinian territories which were forcibly taken by the Israeli government. While the mainstream media makes it sound like a Palestinian bomber ran into the heart of Israel and killed four poor citizens, we should always be critical of framed analyses given to us by any major conglomerate.

Joan Beazleigh, a member of the Campaign for Palestinian rights, reflects on her experience in an issue of "The Socialist Worker":

All across Palestine there are roads that join up the Israeli settlements. These are military zones controlled by the Israelis. Palestinians cannot drive on these roads. Israel puts roadblocks across Palestinian villages so people can't get in and out. We went to the village of Yassouf to remove the roadblocks there. If people want to get anywhere they have to come out of town, climb over the two roadblocks, and then get a service taxi from the other side. A journey that should take half an hour could take hours.

Beazleigh paints a rather different picture than we usually see on the news. While Fox News gives legitimacy for Israel claiming that it's trying to break free from Palestinian oppression, it seems to

be the other way around. The real fact is that Israel is systematically creating settlements in predominantly Palestinian areas in order to take better hold of the area and phase out Palestinian occupation.

It seems these days that the countries with the most human rights abuses get the most aid from the United States. While thousands remain starving our government provides funds to bolster the military of the government. Chomsky reflects on human rights issues in Colombia: "The leading human rights violator in the Western Hemisphere by a good margin is Colombia, which has just an atrocious record—they have "social cleansing" programs, before every election members of the opposition parties get murdered, labor union leaders are murdered, students, dissidents are murdered, there are death squads all around. Okay, more than half of U.S. aid to the entire hemisphere goes to Colombia, and the fire's increasing under Clinton" (144).

Even though many of our foreign policies have been justified with statements such as "we're fighting the ruthless tyrants," Chomsky seems to be saying the opposite is the case. The United States actually seems to be supporting the tyrants to protect our interests in central America. Colombia is one of the great examples of American funded terrorism. In order to retain a stronghold on Central America as well as to further the "War on Drugs," we fund the very governmental death squads that we are supposedly fighting in Iraq. The chemical sprayings conducted by the Colombian government have been proven to be cancer causing and have resulted in hundreds of deaths around the region, sprayings which are funded by our government. Of the 2 billion dollars in "aid" we've given Colombia, over 75 percent of the funding goes to the military aid (Patricia Poirier and Mary Durran. Sep. 11, 2001). The aid that is given to the military is used to "defend" against the FARC, a militant socialist group comprised of mainly peasants. The funding we give the government of Colombia is given in order to downplay the socialist revolution and coerce the society into giving in to capitalist control.

While we enter in to a new world comprised of mainly corrupt politicians and their cronies, who legitimize their actions, it's important to remember that the ways in which words are used by the media and the state aren't always in the sense of the real term.

It's simple for mainstream media organizations to package information in a way that gets the general populace to think in accordance with their interests, such is the case with US sponsored terrorism. News anchors use phrases such as "collateral damage" to replace "hundreds of children" and the president's talk of the "peace process" is merely what we're engaging in this week. Absent exposures of the frames that are used to minimize dissident thought produce rampant nationalism, and xenophobia results, which blocks all routs for necessary change.

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Hell on Earth

Clayton Ray Randell

"One of evil's principal modes of being is *looking beyond* (with indifference) that which is before the eyes" (Berger 596). On August 6th 1945, evil was unleashed on the citizens of Hiroshima by President Truman. Are there reasons for creating terror on such a scale? I do not believe America or any other country can justify the use of nuclear weapons.

John Berger, in his essay "Hiroshima," discusses the situation in Japan after the dropping of two atomic bombs on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Using excerpts of personal testimony from victims, Berger illustrates the horror of atomic weapons. The scale of death, disfigurement and pain created in Hiroshima and Nagasaki are unequalled in human history. When confronted by the stories of children burned and crying over their dead parents, I was struck by an overwhelming sorrow. The tales of peoples' skin falling away made my stomach turn in disgust. Yet, there are those that assert there was no other answer to the situation the United States was in. The war in the South Pacific was hard fought and thousands of U.S. soldiers lost their lives. Japan had attacked first at Pearl Harbor and destroyed much of the Navy's fleet. America's forces were far from home and vulnerable. Perhaps Japan's immediate surrender may have saved more lives overall than were lost in the firestorm of the atomic bomb.

There has been much discussion about the decision to drop these weapons labeled "Fat Man" and "Little Boy." Was it appropriate to drop them on civilians living in their homeland? Were American lives saved by the destruction of these cities and subsequent surrender of the Japanese? In William L. Laurence's essay "Atomic Bombing Of Nagasaki Told By Flight Member" he shares with some pride that the "gadget," as he affectionately calls the atomic bomb, could release the blast force of twenty to forty thousand tons of TNT (247). Laurence also states that the endeavor to create the bombs was the greatest effort of human intellect in history (247). The members of the flight crew aboard the

plane that dropped the bomb on Nagasaki were of the opinion that no nation could withstand such an assault for long. This was obviously true as Japan surrendered with little delay after the attack.

Was it possible that America would have been defeated by the Japanese had we not developed the atomic bomb in time? Berger's stance is that this question and others like it are irrelevant. Despite arguing the statistics and possibilities, the fact remains, what occurred in Japan was evil. These two acts of premeditated mass murder were perpetrated on two large cities populated by civilians. The heart of the mushroom cloud "was 300,000 degrees centigrade" (592). Thousands died in a flash of light while others had their flesh scalded. The American military targeted people who were not fighting in their Emperor's war. Berger asserts that under any other circumstances these two attacks would be openly classified as "terrorist acts" (595). The United Nations has decrees stating that an attacking force cannot target civilians or civilian infrastructure. Why would the United Nations have such decrees? Because these atrocities are unconscionable.

How could the American people accept the bombings? Reading over the straight statistics that have been gathered, one does not realize the impact on the lives of an entire nation. When perusing the accounts of the technical aspects of the bombs, one does not see the loss of humanity both physically and philosophically. People are insulated from the realities of war here in America. Few Americans have seen the results of machine gun fire or anti-tank missiles. During World War II people were quite happy to do their patriotic part with little thought as to what our armed forces were doing.

In Zoë Tracy Hardy's account in "What Did You Do In The War Grandma?" she explains how she very naively participated in the construction of the planes that carried the two atomic bombs to Japan. Hardy and her compatriots at the time were excited about helping in the war effort. They were diligent and worked long hours at the factory. Most of her friends were elated when the war was declared at an end. Zoë Tracy Hardy, however, was downcast from the realization that she was involved in such destruction. Hardy asks if delivering such destruction to a nation that was on its way to losing "...wasn't sort of like kicking a dead horse---brutally" (145).

There are those that believe the end of communism came through the bankruptcy of the Soviet Union in the arms race. Others say that the deterrence of total annihilation kept the nations of the world from battling each other to destruction. I feel the reality is that no person can make the decision to destroy without inviting evil into his or her heart. No one can murder without accepting that some people do not deserve to live. It is impossible to fight evil with evil, as it only multiplies itself. Love comes from understanding and communication. The absence of love is hate which springs from fear and ignorance. The people of Earth must exchange ideas and goods. The moral arena of politics often has little to do with real ethics. If we can keep hold of our leaders hearts and minds we will not be a party to such evil again.

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Lucinda Sears
Untitled
Graphite, 24" x 18"

Blackbirds Fly with Cowboys

James L. Hardesty

Say 'Goodbye' to Detroit City,
I'm headed down the road.
I'd like to spend some time in Austin town.
You can hand me down my hat and boots
and my Hummingbird guitar, cause
I'm gonna be a cowboy from now on.

The song "Cowboy From Now On" was written by my uncle, David, and my dad, just after they had returned from Willy Nelson's 2nd Annual 4th of July Picnic in 1974. I wasn't around yet, never even thought of except for in the nightmares of a young man, but that song runs through my head every day—a reminder of where home is.

Now my dad and David are both successful attorneys and have left the cowboy dream far behind. My uncle returned to Detroit—he still wears his hat and boots while riding his lawn mower—but that song can bring them together, regardless of the 2,500 miles that separates them geographically. When they sing it now—if they sing it now—or think about the days when they sang it together long ago, they too can return home. When I listen to it, I can sit back on a comfy old sofa in the dark recesses of my mind, tapping my foot and singing along, just as countless others must have done back then.

When I think of home, my first thoughts are of the faint smell of cow dung lingering on the damp breeze as I drove north in my beat-up Chevy Luv toward Bellingham from Arizona, and although the malodorous aroma did give me a sense that I was nearing my destination, the smell alone is not inclusive of home. Besides, I hesitate at reducing my notion of home to the scent of bovine feces. Upon further reflection I remember a treasure situated on a shelf in my house: a compilation of my dad's recordings on compact disc. Some of the songs are solo, recorded in a kitchen on Jersey Street, and some are with David and the bands that they have been in over the years. The CD—made as a gift for my Papa's 80th birthday—covers nearly four decades of music that defines

both of them as young men. I was very little when David moved away but I can still remember the way the two of them harmonized. It was almost as if they were brought to the earth for no other reason than to sing together. Listening to this music I realize where my home truly is.

Home has nothing to do with the house or city in which I reside. I feel as much at home in this small apartment filled with toys and children, with dishes piled up in the sink and too much laundry on the floor and never enough time to catch up, as I did growing up in either my mom or dad's house when the weight of domestic concerns was not placed on my shoulders. This space feels as much like home as my dingy place in Phoenix or the fishing boat I worked on in the Bering Sea, or for that matter, the open road endlessly laid out in front of that beat-up Chevy Luv. What I have realized, maybe for the first time, is that my home is firmly planted in my mind, surrounded by music and laughter, good food and conversations past—my home is always with me in my memories. Like a slide show of my life, they run through my head as if driving me—crazily hurried in a Neal Cassady-like road trip—to some better understanding of who I am.

Home doesn't hinge on if my parents are split up, if I was teased relentlessly as a child about my buck teeth and Afro, or if my swollen purple face (resulting from a forty foot plunge over a waterfall) was eerily reflected in the frightened eyes of my parents, betraying their calm words. Home was when I sat on the frozen ground, feet limply dangling into a newly dug grave, my shoulders steaming from exertion and shaking with grief as I watched my tears slowly absorb into the thirsty soil which would consume the only dog I had ever loved or called my own. Home was when from the backseat of the car the sweet voice of my step-daughter, Alexis, audibly accepted me as Daddy for the first time and I found the courage to respond to the infinitely frightening implications of that name. It was on a bus in Israel, where as a lonely boy yearning for home I sang old James Taylor songs that reminded me of Uncle David, although I have never to this day heard him sing a JT song. It was when I stood at the pinnacle of Mt. Sinai and even while

standing in the footsteps of Moses just couldn't bring myself to believe in God. Home was a little rental house where I sat, ring in hand, realizing for the first time the fragility of hope and love, as heartbreak's overwhelming emptiness echoed off the dusty hardwood floors just after the sudden departure of my fiancé, and also when none of that shit mattered as I stood crying openly in front of my family and friends while in awe over the unsurpassable beauty that radiated from my new love, Katie, as she slowly walked towards me to embark on our life-long journey. I was at home when I kneeled on a cold linoleum hospital floor next to my new bride when we learned that our first attempt at a child had failed, taking refuge in the soft warmth of that part of the neck reserved for those loved the most, and at home in St. Joseph's Birthing Center when our daughter, Skylar Abigail, slipped from my wife's warm womb into my unsure and wavering arms—a sigh of relief emptied from my dry lungs when I saw that she was *perfect*—my life changing forever with just one glance into that little girl's eyes. Home was all the times I thought I hated my brother Josh when we were boys, but nearly killed someone in protection of him as a man, and it was when my best friend recently told me that his marriage is over after he tried so *goddamned* hard to make it work and I think of how every marriage is bent like a bamboo bow; too much pressure and they will break. Home resides in every instant I felt bad when I didn't tell someone how much I loved them or shrugged off the love offered to me and silly sentimentality. And I'm at home when I sit with misty eyes recollecting all the times in my life which have made me who I am and brought me to where I am. All of those experiences, whether wonderful or unbearably cruel, have been laid out in some ungodly mathematical formula that equals home, regardless of whether or not I solve it for X. The only way I can hold onto the concept of home with an unbreakable white-knuckled death grip is to keep it with me in my head, and more often than not, it takes the form of song.

No matter if it is an original piece by my father or a Duran Duran song that I listened to in the hospital or a Colville Melody tune from my wedding, music is the glue for me; it is the adhesive that

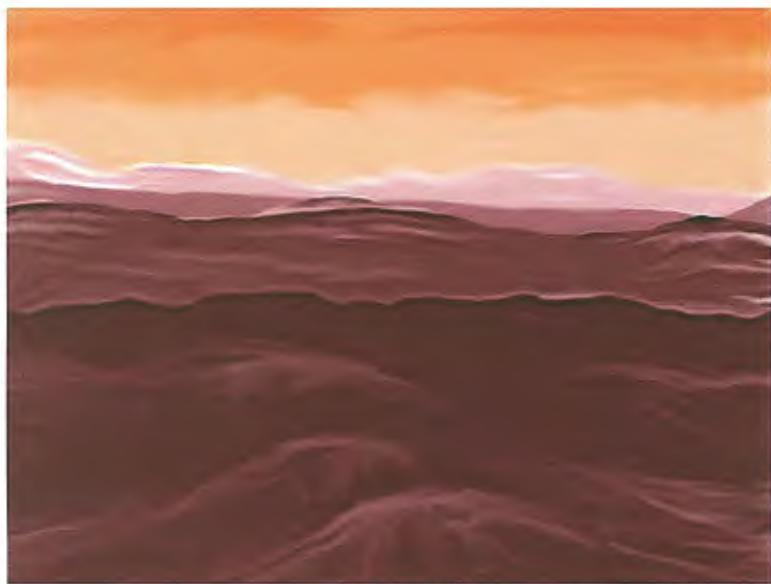
takes all the good and bad and, using the pressures of life, laminates it into this beautiful structure that will forever be under construction—never completely finished—but will always be home. The earliest stirrings of memory for me come from the songs Dad picked on his guitar (most early memory was lost when I fell). There are some in particular (“Desperado Waiting for a Train,” “Rocky Top,” “Cripple Creek,” “Leader of the Band,” “London Homesick Blues,” “Gonna Be a Cowboy”) that are the most vivid memories I have. When I hear other people telling stories of their childhood and the vibrant recollection of the home that they grew up in, I am envious. To remember those images so clearly is a gift, a gift often taken for granted. When I close my eyes in an attempt to view the past all is black. There is no vision, but somewhere in the dark, in another room in the house, I can hear guitars strummed and a banjo picked. Voices permeate the dense blackness, making the dark a place of comfort instead of a monster’s paradise. I see Dad slowly walking toward me, guitar slung over his shoulder, his “thundering velvet hands” gracefully dancing across the strings, and then sitting on the edge of my bed and singing “London Homesick Blues.” As I listen to the song, to the voice of the man I love more than anything, I allow my eyes to flutter shut: comfortable, safe, secure. I know that even when my dad is gone I will always be able to visit him in the darkness while he strums his guitar and sings for his lonesome son—*I wanna go home with the armadillo, country music in Amarillo and Abilene, the friendliest people and the prettiest women you’ve ever seen.*

So now I am that man who must provide comfort. My daughters look to me for security, for guidance. I’m not much of a musician—I recently purchased a banjo, however—but maybe these words are my song. Maybe these little symbols on paper will serve as a window overlooking the vast rolling hills of my past that my girls can use to shed an honest insight on who I really am.

When I lie on my deathbed (many years from now) maybe we—my wife and girls and I—can all sing the Beatles’ “Black Bird” together, because I know it will make them feel at home. Maybe they’ll be able to sing that song when life is cruel or when they bury their dog, or as they gently rub the backs of their own sleepless children, or maybe just when they just miss their Old Man. Maybe when they close their eyes in search of me, I’ll be able to walk

through that dark room, sit on the corner of their bed, gently rubbing their backs, and softly sing to them—*black bird fly, you have always waited for this moment to arrive*—and watch as comfort allows their beautiful little eyes to flutter shut in peaceful, secure and *happyslumber*. Maybe.

Because there will be a time when I too will lie motionless in the frozen ground, no better off than that ugly mutt, but I'll have died with a song in my head and a smile on my face. My legacy will have been left behind and I know beyond a shadow of a doubt that I will have gone to the great jukebox in the sky, or the honky-tonk in hell, it's no matter to me. Where ever I end up, it will be the place of good men with beautiful voices and, as I patiently wait the arrival of my precious wife, I'll be listening to my father sing—*like desperados waiting for a train*—and once again, I'll be home.



Marcia Bibbero
Sinuously
Digital art, 12" x 16"

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