

AN INTERVIEW WITH CODE PINK'S JODIE EVANS  
THE GROUP BEHIND THE GOP TAKEOVER

# The Progressive

November 2011

## Defending the Commons

By Anne-Marie Cusac  
and Antonino D'Ambrosio



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LISA HANEY

"DOGGEDLY INDEPENDENT,  
UNDAUNTED BY POWER. HIS STORIES  
BITE, THEY'RE SO RELEVANT THEY  
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# The Progressive

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COVER BY LISA HANEY

16 Cover



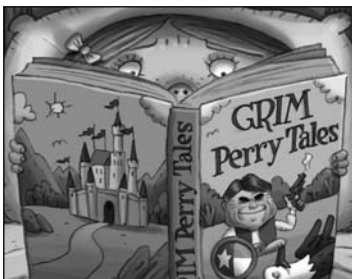
12



26



33



46

- 4 **Editor's Note**
- 5 **No Comment**
- 6 **Letters**
- 7 **Comment** Class Warfare, Anyone?
- 9 **On the Line**

Columns 12 **Terry Tempest Williams** enjoys watching her religion on stage.

14 **Michael Feldman** comes up with a quick solution to our budgetary woes.

**Cover** 16 **Overdue Notice** *Antonino D'Ambrosio*  
As cities close libraries or slash their budgets, we must defend this democratic institution.

20 **A Derrick by Your Campsite** *Anne-Marie Cusac*  
In Ohio, thanks to John Kasich, state parks now welcome oil and gas companies.

Features 26 **The Group Behind the Republican Takeover** *Elizabeth DiNovella*

The Republican State Leadership Committee has played a key role in the party's recent successes.

31 **Media Activist Runs for Congress** *Dennis Bernstein*  
Norman Solomon puts down his pen and throws his hat in the ring.

Interview 33 **Jodie Evans** *David Barsamian*  
"We're always trying to find ways that we can disturb power," says the co-founder of Code Pink.

Culture 39 **Poem** *Eliot Khalil Wilson*

41 **Kate Clinton** finds a reason to laugh.

42 **Dave Zirin** explains why tennis pros need a union.

43 **Books** Ruth Conniff reviews *Class Warfare: Inside the Fight to Fix America's Schools*, by Steven Brill.

46 **Jim Hightower** dispels some Perry tales.

**EDITOR**

Matthew Rothschild

**POLITICAL EDITOR**

Ruth Conniff

**MANAGING EDITOR**

Amitabh Pal

**CULTURE EDITOR**

Elizabeth DiNovella

**CONTRIBUTING WRITERS**

David Barsamian, Kate Clinton, Anne-Marie Cusac, Edwidge Danticat, Susan J. Douglas, Will Durst, Barbara Ehrenreich, Eduardo Galeano, Jim Hightower, Fred McKissack Jr., John Nichols, Adolph Reed Jr., Luis J. Rodriguez, Terry Tempest Williams, Dave Zirin

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## Editor's Note Matthew Rothschild

# For the Commons

Here at *The Progressive*, we were all taken aback by the news that Wangari Maathai died on September 25. She was one of our heroes.

Our colleague Amitabh Pal had the pleasure of interviewing her for the cover story of our May 2005 issue, a year after she won the Nobel Peace Prize, the first African woman ever to have such an honor bestowed on her.

She was most famous for launching the Green Belt movement in Kenya, where she was born.

"Nobody would have bothered me if all I did was encourage women to plant trees," she told Pal. "But I started seeing the linkages between the problems we were dealing with and the root causes."

One of those root causes was corruption.

Another was sexism.

And another was what she called the privatization of common goods.

She had an expansive field of vision, which allowed her to see how interconnected everything is. And when she accepted her Nobel Prize, she issued a warning: "The extreme global inequities and prevailing consumption patterns continue at the expense of the environment and peaceful co-existence. The choice is ours." It still is.

This month, we explore the privatization of the commons here in the United States. Anne-Marie Cusac investigates what it means for state parks in Ohio and, by extension, other public lands elsewhere in the United States. And Antonino D'Ambrosio visits public libraries and warns of the cutbacks that many of them face. We are in an age where conservatives claim that everything public is suspect and everything private is sacred. The entire concept of "public goods" or "the commons" or "the commonweal" is under assault. We need to defend it.

David Barsamian has another great interview for us this month. It's with Jodie Evans of Code Pink. His interview with Chris Hedges in August brought a lot of positive response from readers, and I hope this one will, too.

Barsamian found himself in the news on September 23 when the government of India would not let him enter the country. Immigration officers said he was on the banned list. For a nation that prides itself on being the world's largest democracy, that is a disgrace.

Barsamian has interviewed several Indian intellectuals for *The Progressive*, including Amartya Sen, Vandana Shiva, and Arundhati Roy twice, most recently in March 2009.

That interview may have gotten under the skin of the Indian authorities. In the introduction, he gave some background on India's repression in Kashmir. "Tens of thousands of Kashmiris have been killed, thousands have been disappeared," he wrote.

When he asked Roy about Kashmir, she denounced India's crackdown.

"There isn't any possibility of India managing to continue to bulldoze this population in Kashmir," she said. "Eventually all that can come out of it is destruction."

The Indian government is intensely sensitive on the issue of Kashmir. That may be why it gave the boot to Barsamian, who has been outspoken on Kashmir. But you can't call yourself a democracy while suppressing free speech and clamping down on criticism.

Please contact the Indian Embassy in Washington, D.C., and let the ambassador know how you feel about India's treatment of this outstanding progressive journalist. Write to: Ambassador Nirupama Rao, The Indian Embassy, 2107 Mass. Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20008, or e-mail her at [ambassador@indiagov.org](mailto:ambassador@indiagov.org).

We cannot let this stand. ♦

## No Comment

### Executive Excess

Some companies pay their CEOs more than what they pay in taxes, according to a new report by the Institute for Policy Studies. For example, the International Paper Company's CEO John Faraci received a 75 percent pay hike in 2010, pocketing \$12.3 million, while the company got \$249 million in what amounted to a tax refund.

### Middle Class Mitt

At a town hall meeting, millionaire Mitt Romney said he favors a tax policy that will help the middle class, "the 80 to 90 percent of us in this country."

### Of Free Markets and Famines

Republican Presidential candidate Ron Paul says that famines in Africa are the result of a lack of "free market systems," notes *CrooksandLiars.com*. "The countries that are more socialistic have more famines," Paul told CNN's T. J. Holmes. "If you look at Africa, they don't have any free market systems and property rights and they have famines and no medical care. So the freer the system, the better the health care."

### This Land Is Not Your Land

Incidents of vigilantes destroying public lands are on the rise in New Mexico after Representative Steve Pearce, a tea party Republican there, urged counties to take control of federal public lands, reports *com-mondreams.org*. Pearce has proposed exempting logging in national forests from all environmental laws.

### Crazy Censorship at Willie Nelson Concert

A woman at a Willie Nelson concert at the Nebraska State Fair was told she couldn't wear her T-shirt because it had cannabis leaves on the front and back, reports the *Lincoln Journal-Star*. State Fair executive director Joseph McDermott said the state fair is a "family event" and that "we don't permit the promotion of illegal activity." McDermott also said he wasn't familiar with Nelson's pro-pot platform. "To be honest, I'm not much of a Willie Nelson fan," he said.

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*Readers are invited to submit No Comment items. Please send original clippings or photocopies and give name and date of publication. Submissions cannot be acknowledged or returned.*

### Positive State of Mind

South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley has ordered all state employees under her control to say, "It's a great day in South Carolina" when answering the phone, reports *Wonkette*. Haley said the change would boost the morale of state workers. "It's part of who I am," Haley said. "As hokey as some people may think it is, I'm selling South Carolina as this great, new, positive state that everybody needs to look at."



### Jesus or Jail?

Local judges in Bay Minette, Alabama, will give those found guilty of misdemeanors the option of serving out their time in jail, paying a fine, or attending church each Sunday for a year, reports CNN. Those who go to church will have to check in with a pastor and the police department each week.



### Tea Party Poser

Representative Chip Cravaack of Minnesota, a tea party Congressman, went after big government during his 2010 run for Congress, even though he was cashing disability checks at the time. Minnesota Public Radio reports: "Cravaack's earned income for fiscal year 2010 topped out at \$92,273; the cash comes in the form of disability payments for sleep apnea, which ended his flying career with Northwest Airlines, now Delta Airlines, in 2007."

### A Couple Hundred Thousand Ain't Much

Representative John Fleming, Republican of Louisiana, attacked President Obama's proposal to tax the wealthy, and said he, as a businessman, cannot afford another tax increase, reports *Think Progress*. Fleming, whose businesses made \$6.3 million last year, said that his profits are "a mere fraction of that" and that "by the time I feed my family, I have maybe \$400,000 left over." The median U.S. household income in 2010 was just under \$50,000.



STUART GOLDENBERG

# Letters to the Editor

## Public Education Not for All

While I disagree with the idea of using vouchers to send disabled kids to substandard, for-profit warehouses, I also disagree with the assumption that every disabled kid can and should be mainstreamed into the public school system ("The GOP Attack on Special Ed," by Ruth Conniff, September issue). I have seen the warehousing of severely disabled kids in the back row of public schools.

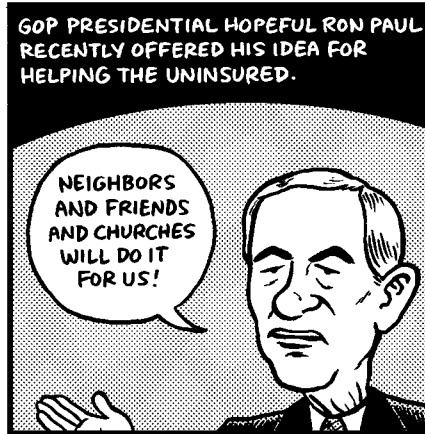
My sister is a teacher's aide for the disabled in a rural New Hampshire school district. She has had to take special courses in how to defend herself and not harm her charges without hurting any of them. She has been bit and hit and has had objects thrown at her. As she has told me on numerous occasions over the years, most of her kids need more specialized care than the school can provide.

I also saw this, as my grown children are a product of the Wisconsin public school system. At the time, our district was the poorest, lowest spending per pupil district in the state. For a couple of years, the disabled kids had to have class time in an expanded janitor's workroom. The severely handicapped, mostly with cerebral palsy, were lined up and strapped into their wheelchairs at the back of the room. At recess, the aides walked them around the playground. If the weather was nice, they were taken on long walks around town. They could not feed themselves and needed personal care.

If the government wants to give out vouchers, maybe they should be for specialized classes and programs such as speech and physical and occupational therapy that parents' insurance does not cover. I don't want these kids to be warehoused at public school expense any more than at the hands of greedy private for-profit business owners. It is our public duty and responsibility to educate all of our citizens, but we must remember,

## SLOWPOKE

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not all of us are equal when it comes to our ability to learn.

*Debra Augustyn  
Northport, New York*

## Justice for Sale

Tim DeChristopher's message resonates loud and clear ("Tim DeChristopher's Message" by Terry Tempest Williams, September issue). We don't have a legal system in this country anymore. We have a corporate-controlled travesty that poses as a legal system while promoting and protecting business interests at all levels of our society.

Bankers and Wall Street executives who steal billions of dollars from retirement funds and drive this nation to the edge of bankruptcy, and politicians who lie us into unnecessary wars

that cost billions of dollars and a million lost lives, can all escape prosecution. Yet a young man who is "fighting for a livable future" so the human race can survive on this planet is sent to prison by a kangaroo court.

We live in a country that has lost its moral and legal compass.

*Dennis M. Clausen  
Escondido, California*

*The editors welcome correspondence from readers on all topics, but prefer to publish letters that comment directly on material previously published in The Progressive. All letters may be edited for clarity and conciseness, and may appear either in the magazine or on its web page. Letters may be e-mailed to: editorial@progressive.org. Please include your city and state.*

## Class Warfare, Anyone?

If you live in Washington, D.C., for any time at all, the rigged nature of our system becomes blatantly obvious. So dominant is the power of money, so subservient are politicians to the corporations and the wealthy that finance them, so unresponsive is the supposedly democratic system to the needs of the people that there can be no denying the class bias of our government.

For decades now, with one policy after another, “our” government has been systematically redistributing income and wealth to a tiny elite at the top. Yet the mere mention by President Obama of making the millionaires and billionaires pay a little more in taxes elicits screams of “class warfare” from Republicans.

They and their wealthy backers have been waging class warfare mercilessly over the last four decades, and they’ve been taking no prisoners.

During this period, the top 0.1 percent of the country—those 152,000 people who make more than \$5.6 million a year—have seen their income level jump up an astonishing 385 percent, according to *The Washington Post*. Meanwhile, those in the bottom 90 percent of earners have seen their incomes fall over the same period.

“The wealthiest in this country have never had it so good,” said Senator Bernie Sanders at Fighting Bob Fest in Madison, Wisconsin, on September 17. “They want more and more and more and more, and they don’t care how many children they step on to get it.”

In the last ten years, the median household income fell 7.1 percent, and African Americans’ household income fell by more than twice that amount. Incomes for most Americans continue to fall. Last year, median household income dropped 2 percent to \$49,445.

These statistics demonstrate that the middle class is under siege.

Meanwhile, the lower class is under water.

Last year, a record number of Americans—forty-six million people—were living below the official poverty line, which is set at just over \$11,000 for individuals and just over \$22,000 for a family of four.



DAVID G. KLEIN

Twenty million Americans were actually living at least 50 percent below the poverty line, if you can imagine that.

And—get this—more than one out of every five children in America is living in poverty.

The rise of poverty in America represents a moral indictment of our economy and our priorities.

Politicians talk all day about helping the middle class, and yes, the middle class does need help—lots of help, especially today. But so, too, do the poor.

Republicans don’t talk about the poor much, except to say they can be saved by capitalism. In one of the Republican Presidential debates, Rick Santorum bragged about eliminating welfare, saying it created a “culture of

---

“Class warfare is being waged in America, and the wrong side is winning.”

—Bernie Sanders

dependency,” and he vowed to put time limits on food stamps, as well, an idea that Rick Perry echoed. And Ron Paul famously responded to a question about what to do about a man who chose not to buy health insurance and ends up in a coma. “That’s what freedom’s all about: taking your own risks,” Paul said, as members of the tea party crowd yelled that the man should die.

The Democrats haven’t showered themselves with glory when it comes to dealing with poverty, either. To an embarrassing degree, Democrats have stopped talking about the poor. I think I can count on one hand the number of times Obama has mentioned the issue.

But silence is not an anti-poverty program. It only makes it worse.

**N**ow, Obama is at least waving at the jobs crisis and the unfairness of our tax system. He’s right to ask the super-rich to pay more.

The top marginal rate in the 1970s was 70 percent, and in Eisenhower’s Administration it was as high as 92 percent. Now it’s 35 percent. Obama is proposing to hike it back up to 39.6 percent, where it stood when Clinton was President. By the reaction from Republicans, you’d have thought Obama was calling for out-and-out expropriation.

Obama is also right to propose repairing our infrastructure and funding our schools. And he’s right to demand the extension of unemployment benefits, which would stimulate the economy faster than almost any other measure, in addition to being a moral imperative.

And Obama is right to defend regulations against dangerous corporate products and workplaces. “I reject the idea that we need to ask people to choose between their jobs and their safety,” he said when he announced his new economic stimulus program.

But the payroll tax cut that Obama proposes for individuals is actually pretty regressive. Those in the top 1 percent would get a tax break of more than \$4,000 while those in the bottom 20 percent would

get \$255 and those in the next 20 percent would get \$651, according to the Tax Policy Center that Brookings and the Urban Institute run.

The payroll tax cut is also a mediocre way to stimulate the economy. Tax cuts “targeted toward low- and middle-income people would be most effective,” says Citizens for Tax Justice, because these are the people most likely to spend the money the fastest.

Giving big companies a payroll tax holiday is even worse, as the progressive

labor coalition Strengthen Social Security points out. “Corporations are already sitting on substantial cash reserves; an employer payroll tax cut will increase these cash holdings without any guarantee of additional hiring,” the group notes. “They made a record \$3.8 trillion in profits in the second quarter of 2011. Most companies are not using their cash to hire new employees now. A tax cut will just fatten their bottom line.”

What’s more, by reducing Social Security taxes, Obama would be draining more money from that program at a time when Republicans already are saying it’s going bankrupt (which it isn’t).

Obama is also pushing ahead with George W. Bush’s trade policies. He is urging Congress to pass free trade agreements with Colombia, Panama, and South Korea, claiming they would help bring jobs here. But NAFTA and other free trade agreements have taken jobs from America and mostly helped U.S. multinationals.

Overall, while Obama’s rhetoric has improved in recent months and while some of his proposals on jobs make sense, the entire package comes nowhere close to what is necessary, given the magnitude of the crisis. Even if every one of his new proposals were enacted right away, chances are they wouldn’t bring the unemployment rate under 8 percent.

And there is no way Republicans are going to give him everything he asks for because they don’t want the economy to recover at all. They want it to be just as bad as possible come Election Day.

**T**here’s always been class warfare in the United States. Sometimes it’s masked. Sometimes it’s naked. It’s naked today.

And it’s one-sided.

The wealthiest Americans and the largest corporations here have been winning battle after battle. They are extremely class conscious and highly mobilized, and they obviously have enormous resources at their disposal—never more so than now, after the *Citizens United* case.

Our side sure doesn’t have the funds. And working Americans are only now beginning to regain and reassert a sense of class consciousness, especially in places like Ohio and Wisconsin. Creative protests, like the “Occupy Wall Street” campaign that began in late September, may also herald a new resistance.

I should hope so. It’s been a long time in coming.

While I’m not crazy about “warfare” as a metaphor, we do need to work as hard as we can, nonviolently, for some semblance of economic justice.

And when people accuse us of engaging in class warfare, tell them to open their eyes. ♦

—Matthew Rothschild

---

**“If anyone’s declared class warfare it’s the people who inhabit the top rungs of big corporations and Wall Street. . . . They’ve declared it on average workers.”**

—Robert Reich

# Time for Climate Action



Nisab, Yemen  
350.ORG



On September 24, people in 175 countries got moving for bold climate action. People biked, skated, marched, swam, and kayaked to show the need for reducing reliance upon fossil fuels. The day of action was organized by 350.org, a global grassroots movement.

*For more information, go to 350.org.*



Tuvalu  
350.ORG



Aracaju, Brazil  
350.ORG



MATHIEU SOETE/350.ORG  
Mollina, Spain



350.ORG  
Haridwar, India

PAUL WEISKEL



# Occupy Wall Street



JIM KIERNAN



OCCUPY WALL STREET

## New York City

Inspired by the pro-democracy uprisings in Egypt and Spain, protesters created an encampment in the financial district of New York City. It began on September 17 and was called for by *Adbusters* magazine. The goal: Put an end to the “monied corruption of our democracy.”

For more information, go to [www.adbusters.org/campaigns/occupywallstreet](http://www.adbusters.org/campaigns/occupywallstreet).

# Education, Not Deportation

## Detroit

Families in Detroit marched against harassment and racial profiling by the Border Patrol and Immigration and Customs Enforcement at the beginning of the school year. The immigration agency came under fire this April for targeting a school where immigrant parents were dropping off and picking up their children.

For more information, go to [1michigan.org](http://1michigan.org).



© JIM WEST (JIMWESTPHOTO.COM)

Janesville, Wisconsin

**On the Line**

# Heal America

National Nurses United organized a day of action on September 1, calling for elected officials to save Main Street and to stop kowtowing to Wall Street. Events were held in sixty cities throughout the country.

For more information, go to [www.nationalnursesunited.org](http://www.nationalnursesunited.org).



Janesville, Wisconsin

PHOTOS BY NATIONAL NURSES UNITED

# Tar Heel Bigotry

Raleigh, North Carolina

On September 12, the North Carolina state senate passed SB 106, a state constitutional amendment banning any legal recognition of same-sex couples. On the day of the vote, thousands gathered on the grounds of the legislature.

The proposed amendment will now be on the state ballot for the May 2012 primary election.

For more information, go to [equalitync.org](http://equalitync.org).



PHOTOS BY WILL PADGETT

# A Musical on My Faith



It can't be that good, I thought to myself. No doubt, they will have gotten some things wrong. Who knows, I might even be offended.

I'm talking about *The Book of Mormon*, the award-winning musical written by Trey Parker and Matt Stone, creators of television's *South Park*, with composer Robert Lopez of *Avenue Q*, now playing at the Eugene O'Neill Theatre in New York City.

As a Mormon, albeit an unorthodox one, I was skeptical. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints seems to be an easy target these days, with its polygamist past associated with the prurient trials of Warren Jeffs or the popularity of *Big Love*. But within two minutes of the musical's first number—"Hello!" with Mormon missionaries ringing doorbells—I became its biggest fan. My husband, Brooke, who is Brigham Young's great-great-grandson, was also charmed. Immediately, we saw our brothers, our cousins, friends, and neighbors who did exactly that—rang doorbells and proselytized from Florida to Brazil to New Zealand to Japan.

I can't wait to see the play again.

And evidently, this is exactly what

---

*Terry Tempest Williams is the author of "The Open Space of Democracy" and, most recently, "Finding Beauty in a Broken World." She is the recipient of the 2010 David R. Brower Conservation Award for activism.*

the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints is banking on. The Mormon Church has just launched a \$1 million ad campaign focusing on the Big Apple, with a very large loop-video directly in view of those entering and exiting the Eugene O'Neill Theatre to catch the attention of theatergoing crowds in Times Square. The tried and true adage, "What do you know about the Mormon Church and



KEVIN SOMERS

would you like to know more?" is now newly relevant, as the church is ready to cash in on the runaway success of this "miracle" musical.

The only things Parker and Stone got wrong from my perspective are pretty mundane compared to all they got right. Mormon missionaries now go to the Mission Training Center in Provo, Utah, for two weeks (it used

to be two months), not three months as they say in the musical. And I have never heard a Mormon say, "Praise Christ."

During the first act, I sat in real discomfort, not because I was offended but because I was haunted. What was humor to Parker and Stone was my faith. I grew up in a traditional Mormon household. There is much to praise in the name of community. If you ever doubt who you are, you simply go to a family reunion. You see yourself replicated over four generations. I knew five of my great-grandparents. It is a living history predicated not just on belief but land. We call it Zion. We have our own Jordan River.

In 1847, when Brigham Young looked over the vast salt desert with a shimmering Great Salt Lake on the horizon, he said, "This is the place." My family still believes this. Six generations of mine have settled in Salt Lake City. My grandmother Lettie Romney Dixon and George Romney (Mitt's father) were cousins. Both were born in Colonia Dublán, the Mormon colonies in Mexico, where members of the faith could

practice polygamy without persecution. Because of the Mexican Revolution, my family was forced back to the United States. That makes Mitt Romney and me cousins once removed.

The prologue opens with a description of the theological foundations of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints being based on "the golden plates" written by an ancient prophet

named Mormon and unearthed by an eighteen-year-old named Joseph Smith. When it mentioned that these sacred texts were buried in a hillside in upstate New York, the audience guffawed with laughter. I recognized this statement as the truth of my people.

It was a bittersweet experience. Jesus Christ coming to America did not seem odd to me as I sat in my seat at the Eugene O'Neill Theatre. Yet, it appeared as fantasy to the rest of the theatergoers around me. And when, the song "Turn It Off" became an all-male revue reminiscent of a Busby Berkeley production, I was struck by how true the lyrics were to the ethos of my LDS community, even within myself.

Elder McKinley, one of the missionaries in the play, sings:

*I've got a feeling  
That you could be feeling  
A whole lot better than you feel  
today.  
You say you've got a problem  
well that's no problem  
It's supereasy not to feel that way!  
When you start to get confused  
because of thoughts in your head  
Don't feel those feelings!  
Hold them in instead!  
Turn it off like a light switch  
just go click!  
It's a cool little Mormon trick!  
We do it all the time  
When you're feeling certain feelings  
that just don't feel right  
Treat those pesky feelings like a  
reading light  
and turn 'em off.*

I appreciated the lens I was being given to view my religious culture—even my own conditioned psyche—by two very astute social critics.

I knew I came from a religion with a rich and imaginative history. Visions are not just reserved for teenage prophets. The Mormon God is a personal god and a responsive one. And we are told when we are married with our partner for "time and all eternity" that we will become gods and goddesses of our own planets. Creation is a foundational tenet

of the theology, be it children or future worlds.

It was literary critic and religious scholar Harold Bloom who called Mormonism "an American religion." He said, "Whatever his lapses, Joseph Smith was an authentic religious genius, unique in our national history."

I remember hearing Bloom speak to a standing-room-only crowd in Salt Lake City discussing his book *The American Religion*. He spoke about Smith's charismatic leadership. He said Smith was destined to become either President of the United States or prophet of a new religion. He chose the latter.

The second act of the musical was hysterical because it cut so close to the bloody bone of satire. When the character Nabulungi, brilliantly played by Nikki M. James (who won a Tony Award for best actress in a musical), is singing from her hut in Uganda, "*I'm on my way—Soon life won't be so shitty—Now salvation has a name: Salt Lake City,*" I thought I was going to die. Having spent a fair amount of time in Africa, the laughter came with an edge.

For readers who have not yet seen *The Book of Mormon* on Broadway, I will not spoil the delights that are to come. But it really is remarkable how Trey Parker, Robert Lopez, and Matt Stone—along with the extraordinary cast and entire collaborative team—create such a bright and biting, sword-slicing, soul-reviving, and humane piece of art that in the end celebrates our humanity. It is a transcendent piece of theater, and this review comes from a member of the very culture it's satirizing.

**W**e are storytelling creatures. We are told a story and then we tell our own.

Truth has little to do with it. What matters is that the great mysteries are explained to us through myth and metaphor. "The only book that matters" is the one we adhere to as sacred text. We are given a cultural template

through story as to how we might live within a moral framework and take care of one another in community.

I left the Eugene O'Neill Theatre feeling I had been fed by a coyote. Trickster Theater. I was proud of my cultural heritage, embarrassed by it, heartbroken and inspired by our hunger to not only be told a story but be transformed by it. This is where I place my faith—the power of a story well told lies in empathy. We are not alone.

I wonder if Mitt Romney has seen this musical? He should. Because on so many levels, the Mormon Church is a stand-in for conservative America, a colonizing America, an America naïve as do-gooders, and at the same time, aggressive in its fundamentalist religion of capitalism at all costs. In the musical, Mormon missionaries head to Uganda. In America, we are proselytizing democracy in the midst of wars in the Middle East and Afghanistan. In the musical, violence occurs when there is no listening. In America's foreign policy, violence is also occurring because there is little listening. Why are we surprised when our motives and mission are not only misunderstood but misinterpreted with disastrous results?

More than fourteen million Mormons accept *The Book of Mormon* as truth. More than fourteen million Americans may one day see *The Book of Mormon*, the musical, and recognize this story as the truth of our times, as our increasingly conservative nation confronts and combats a global consciousness.

Great art is transformative because it inspires us to be our highest and deepest selves. It reminds us what it means to be human. We are both shadow and light.

Great art becomes spiritual when it reminds us what binds us together rather than what separates us. *The Book of Mormon*, the musical, is transcendent because at a time when politics divides us so clearly, we see how powerfully art can bring us together in the midst of political violence. ♦

# Tough Love



Maybe we need a Super-Duper Committee. Super may not cut it. Look, your average Congressional committee couldn't even nail Roger Clemens. The easy peasy trillion and a half initial onslaught will barely lay open the fascia of the body politic; the patient could easily survive and require massive heroic measures. Can't have that, can we?

I'm not a blamer, but did older Americans really think "Spending Our Grandkids Inheritance" stickers on the back of the Winnebago would engender no resentment to those stuck behind them on 141 all the way to Eagle River?

Personally, I don't want to retire anyway, so the specter of tough love in lieu of Obama's health care reform or entitlements transmuted into privileges hardly stirs my thinning hair. True, seventy-six million baby boomers will soon be going boom simultaneously, but by then our severely pruned economy should be sprouting legions of suckers and much shade will be had for all.

Yes, I have concerns for those peristorting ahead down the demographic anaconda. Might not global warming curtail the number of ice floes available to the elderly? Has the time for Vonnegut's Ethical Suicide Parlors, adjacent to HoJo's, come at long last?

---

*Michael Feldman is creator and host of Public Radio International's "Whad'Ya Know?"*

Certainly the greatest generation deserves cost of living, but peg it to 1969 when they last made one. One thing is clear: Older Americans want to do their part to stop sucking at the withered public teat. Cost cutting can make short work of dicey social issues—funding Unplanned Parenthood, for example, or extending the waiting period on abortions to nine months.

Public schools, while not the

easily fundraised around. Click, I know, will do fine without Clack, and if Ira Glass can't pull off *This Former American Life*, no one can. Garrison's retiring, anyway, so at least we'll be spared *The Where's Gary Home Companion*. It might work out that Toll Brothers, "America's Luxury Home Builder®," will generously support *Whad'Ya Know?* along with the Met, even if we have to work the Ring Cycle into our leitmotif. On a clear day, all things considered, you will still pull in *As It Happens* from the CBC pretty much everywhere north of a line from Norfolk to Eureka, courtesy of Canadian socialism.

Today, we're overextended in pretty much the same pattern the Romans were in 44 B.C. when the Senate was forced to take needed cuts directly to Julius Caesar. Scaling the military back to an expeditionary force should not, then, be cause for alarm since it'll get us into a heck of a lot less trouble that way. Perpetual war, while it worked for Oceania, does not come

cheap, even in 1984 dollars.

The only downside I can see in cutting to, and in some cases through, the bone, besides hitting the occasional artery, is the shock and awe to the struggling recovery caused by precipitously yanking out petroleum and gas subsidies. Exxon's \$11 billion first quarter profit, while good on paper, can hardly be called incentive.

For \$11 billion, I don't do any more than I have to, let alone explore and drill. ♦

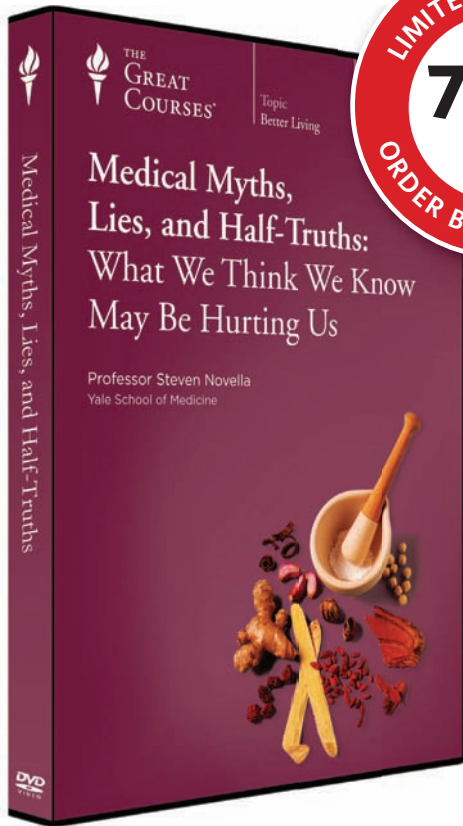


## AUSTERITY

ROBERT GROSSMAN

demons to me they are to many tea party educational philosophers, are easily reformed by taking the English approach and calling private schools public. Voila, problem solved, and without vouchers.

Public broadcasting, too long an employer of last resort for people like myself, needs to face the fact that it's been living beyond its misnomer (Z-105 country hits is public radio). The proposal to cut NPR back to R is not necessarily a bad thing since "no national, no public, just radio" can be



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By Antonino D'Ambrosio  
Illustration by Christophe Vorlet

# Overdue Notice: Defend Our Libraries



*If you have a garden and a library, you have everything you need.—Cicero*

I WAS EIGHT YEARS OLD WHEN I got my first library card. I remember the day as clearly as any early memory I equate with being free. The card was like a golden key that unlocked the doors of the past, present, and future. In the library, I felt alive in every corner of the world. It provided opportunities otherwise denied my hamlet of working class immigrants, caulking the gaps left by an inadequate education and narrow possibilities. It's where I learned to dream of alternatives. It was my personal workshop where I could craft my own ideas about life.

And my experience was by no means unique.

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*Antonino D'Ambrosio is the founder/director of the media and production nonprofit La Lutta NMC ([www.lalutta.org](http://www.lalutta.org)), the author of "A Heartbeat and a Guitar: Johnny Cash and the Making of Bitter Tears," and director/writer/producer of the upcoming feature film "Let Fury Have the Hour" ([www.letfuryhavethehour.com](http://www.letfuryhavethehour.com)).*

Edward Paulino, a professor of history at John Jay College in New York, grew up in the cramped, economically depressed, largely immigrant neighborhood of the Lower East Side. “I found refuge in my local public library,” he says. “Public libraries are the urban equivalent of public parks. Just as tracts of land were designated for use by everyday folks and not the elite, the public library represents the same function. It’s so free and democratic. It’s a kind of club where everyone can be a member and you don’t need any kind of security clearance.”

The public library is a wholly American invention advocating self-determination. While Europeans established subscription libraries a century before the formation of the United States, the people of Peterborough, New Hampshire, established the first public library in April 1833 (the Boston Public Library, America’s first large public library, was not legally established until 1852). Everyone had access to the town’s collective knowledge, regardless of income. The only requirement: Return the materials in good condition and on time so that others may benefit. Since then, the library has become a key pillar in a free people’s participation in democracy.

“I like to refer to public libraries as the most democratic of the institutions government has created,” says Molly Raphael, the president of the American Library Association. In fact, Benjamin Franklin, considered the father of libraries, saw them as “social libraries” where all people were free to participate and share.

Yet today, in the wake of an inexhaustible economic crisis and the reactionary assault on everything public, the public library is under attack.

Local governments across the United States—from New York City to Detroit, and from Denver to Seattle—are slashing library budgets and closing libraries. This threatens to wall off knowledge, restrict access to the Internet, and shutter a valuable communal meeting place. This year, nineteen states are cutting some funding for

public libraries, many by more than 10 percent. New York City, which boasts one of the most extensive public library systems in the country, recently closed fourteen branches, and 300 people lost their jobs.

These cuts will disproportionately punish poor and working class people.

“The public library represents the most powerful and cost-effective wealth-transfer mechanism ever invented,” writes T. J. Stiles, the Pulitzer Prize-winning biographer. “As generations have learned, the aisle between the shelves is a corridor out of poverty, a bypass around inadequate schools, an expressway that adds momentum to even a first-rate education.”

In this age of the Internet and social media, some question the relevance of libraries, even declaring them obsolete. In reality, they are more important than ever.

“Libraries, especially for working people, remain intellectual and cultural lifelines,” says musician and educator Martin Perna. “Given the vast discrepancies in net access for poor, rural, and working class communities of color, libraries now serve as primary points for youth to use the Internet with a broadband connection on something other than a tiny phone screen.”

Raphael adds, “Sixty-five percent of public libraries report that they are the only place in the community where there is free access to the Internet.”

This service becomes even more vital during an economic downturn. Many job applications are available only online. Raphael cites what is now a common example: Someone is directed to the library to use the computers to search and apply for work; the person has never used a computer before, but with the library staff’s help, the person applies for a job and gets it.

Detroit resident Erin Carter looks for jobs using computers at the Chase branch in northwest Detroit, which is under threat of closure. “There is so much stuff closing down,” says Carter, twenty-two. “I don’t know where to go.”

Since I love going to new libraries, I take a trip to Queens and visit branch libraries, including those in Jackson Heights, Forest Hills, and Far Rockaway.

At the Jackson Heights branch, I meet parent Gail Montemayor.

“Public libraries provide one of the only free learning activities,” she tells me. “They facilitate a type of social interaction that is healthy and virtually obsolete in this wireless age. I take my twenty-two-month-old daughter to the library regularly. The library is a cost-effective way of finding books that she will enjoy many times over.” And Montemayor makes the point that “libraries bridge the gap between households that cannot afford a private collection of children’s books in their homes and those that can.”

Johnita Anthony, another Jackson Heights parent, talks about the role libraries played in her life. “The libraries were my study hall teaching me responsibility, respecting and enjoying the art of others, learning the Dewey Decimal system, learning how to research, taking out books on my own and returning them on time,” she says. Anthony now fears her young daughter will miss out on these life lessons.

“Four Nobel Prize winners, including physicist Richard Feynman, came out of the Far Rockaway neighborhood,” Michael Spudic tells me. He used to live in Far Rockaway but now resides in Forest Hills. He praises the neighborhood public library for offering “a world of books and knowledge that is demonstrably colorblind” and “a place to find solace, comfort, and truth in a community space uniquely to be had.”

When I spoke with some of the laid-off employees of the New York City library system, it’s this loss of a respected community space that they mentioned to me above all. Losing a branch library, they said, cost so much more than a place to borrow books. Also at stake is the disappearance of a town square, a free space open to all, regardless of race, class, or

any other social barrier.

Public libraries also serve to counter a broad campaign of intense consumer marketing that tricks us into believing we are more empowered because we can individually connect anytime, anywhere. But with the demise of bookstores, social service institutions, and other physical spaces where people gather and search out information, news, and media in whatever form, there is a social breakdown and a loss of cultur-

al exchange. Confounding this is a peculiar confinement of curiosity: At the library, you have physical interaction with the library staff, meet new people in the community, and scan the stacks looking for one thing yet discovering something else—the hard-to-find book, the obscure title, a new idea. This stands in stark contrast to the passive interaction with a computer and the algorithm's spitting out suggestions based on what people similar to you purchased.

Another key aspect of the public library mission is to defend free speech and intellectual freedom. With programs like “Banned Books Week,” libraries are on the front lines of defending the rights of people to examine unpopular points of view so they can make their own informed decisions.

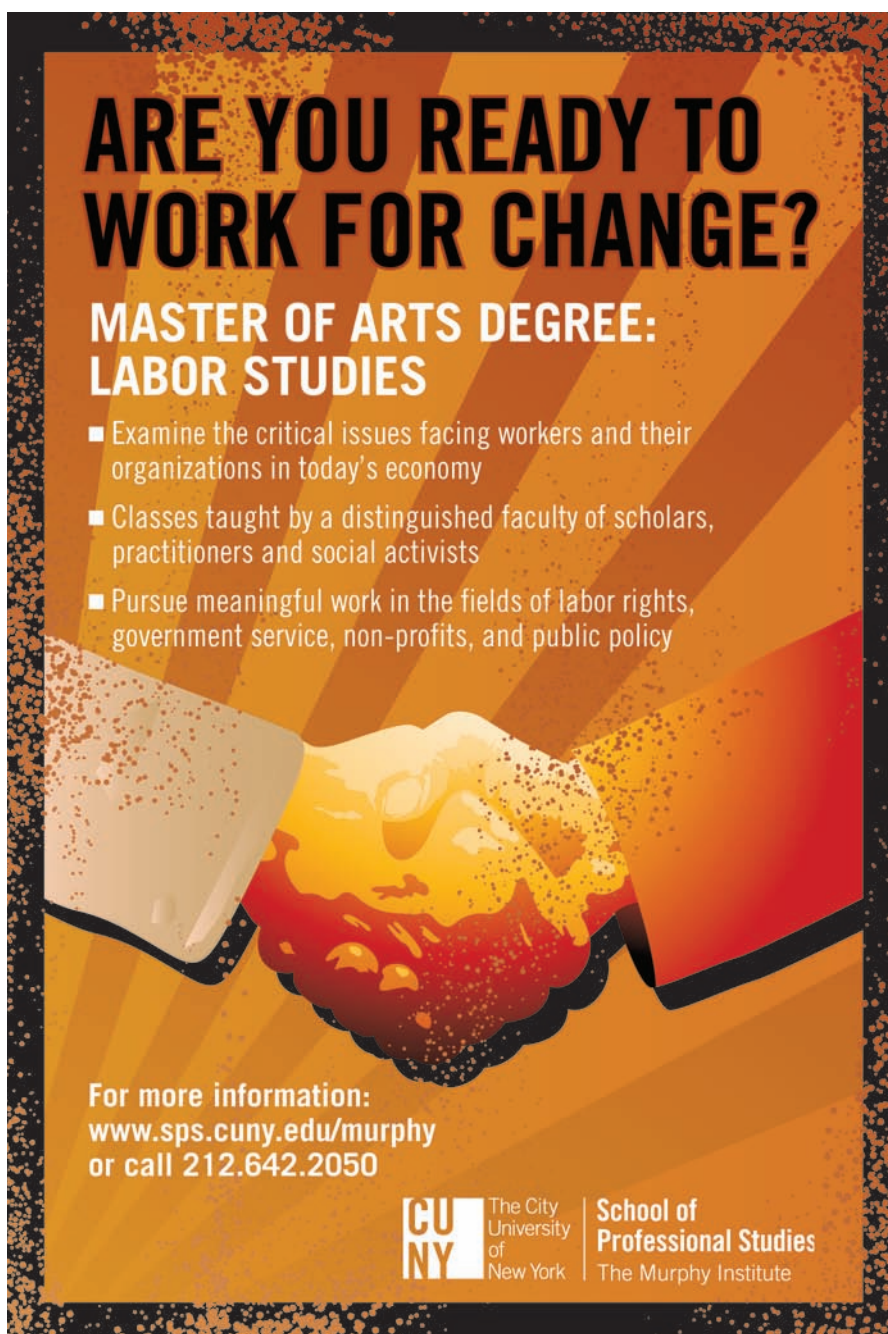
Librarians also have performed a brave role in regards to the Patriot Act, drawing attention to Section 215, which permits the FBI to order librarians and bookstore owners to disclose titles borrowed or bought. And when the FBI imposed a gag order, librarians protested that as well.

Despite the assaults, libraries remain popular with the American public. Thirty-one percent of adults rank the library at the top of their list of tax-supported services, according to the American Library Association. Ninety-three percent believe that library services need to remain free. And two-thirds of Americans carry a library card, according to a recent report the group issued. Still, the report concludes that libraries are easy targets for many state and local budget-cutters, ranking second only to cutting maintenance and services at parks and gardens.

One argument library proponents might want to employ with those fixated on cost-benefit analysis is this one: Libraries yield a sizeable return.

In “The Economic Value of the Free Library of Philadelphia,” the University of Pennsylvania’s Fels Institute of Government proved their economic worth. According to the study, the library in Philadelphia alone created more than \$30 million worth of economic value to the city in fiscal 2010 and had a particularly strong impact on business development and employment. The study found that an “estimated 8,600 businesses could not have been started, sustained, or grown without the resources respondents acquired at the Free Library of Philadelphia. Direct economic impact: Almost \$4 million.”

The current crisis presents a great



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opportunity for libraries to creatively respond and find new ways to connect with people. Libraries across the country are doing just that, as they continue to build a compelling case that they provide a public service as essential as any other.

The Loft at a public library in Charlotte, North Carolina, offers creative spaces designed for collaborative activity, such as recording and animation studios.

The Palm Beach County library system in Florida provides specialized "Government Research Services" information via a library-created Web portal that more than 45,000 patrons use.

Librarian Nate Hill at the Brooklyn Public Library envisions "urban library outposts and storefront library service points." And he sees the library's open space as "easily transformable: one moment a silent reading room, another moment a performance art space, another moment a forum for a community group meeting."

Around the country, communities both small and large have pushed back against the cuts and closures. Take Oakland, California. When it became clear that the city's favored budgetary scenario called for mass library closings, a coalition came together called Save Oakland Libraries. The group devised clever and engaging ways that showed elected officials just how important their branch libraries were. Supporters engaged in a mock funeral procession, sponsored a fourteen-hour read-in outside of City Hall, held a zombie walk, and organized a bike ride for the libraries. The result was that local elected officials this summer agreed to keep open all of Oakland's fourteen libraries.

**T**hroughout my life I've repeatedly tapped the public library. It nourishes my creativity and always leads me to unexpected discoveries. I can't envision my life without it. The library unites me with my fellow citizens through the collective

knowledge stored inside. It's where the most brilliant thinkers, most inspiring teachers, and most daring artists reside, rousing us to stake our own claim on history.

The library remains a transcendent example of democracy at work. Open to all, the only entrance fee is curiosity. Like the marble lions, Patience and Fortitude, that stand before the Beaux-Arts building in midtown Manhattan that houses the main branch of the New York Public Library, libraries capture our imagination while liberating our aspirations. It's imperative for us all who benefit from this wellspring of history and knowledge to defend it as an indispensable public resource, our diary of the human race.

"The health of our civilization, the depth of our awareness about the underpinnings of our culture, and our concern for the future can all be tested by how well we support our libraries," Carl Sagan writes in *Cosmos*, a book I just borrowed from my local library. ♦

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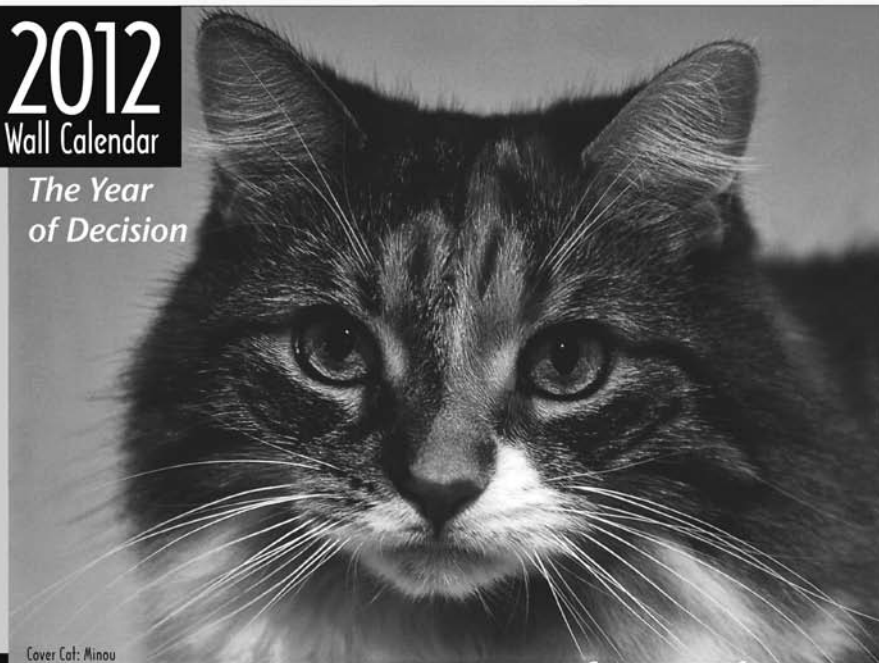
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Text and Photos by Anne-Marie Cusac

# A Derrick by Your Campsite



I'M HIKING THE WINDING PATHS and footbridges toward Cedar Falls at Hocking Hills State Park in Ohio. I'm feeling a damp, soothing coolness on my face and forearms. It is ten degrees cooler in the gorges of Hocking Hills than outside the park. Cedar Falls pours like smooth cream from the rock. A crowd stands, staring with the fascination humans so often have for falling water.

There's a stairwell to the right of the falls, and I climb it. Above the falls is silence. I wander through the trees, and they open into a patch of sun. White gravel chunks begin to show under the grass. It's a road. Grass has grown over the stones. In the middle of the grass sits a bright orange gas pipeline. "Caution," warns a sign on the pipe.

*The Progressive* sent me to see this Ohio state park. And it did so for two reasons: 1) It's beautiful and beloved; 2) it could soon be an oil and gas drill site.

In late June, Ohio Republican Governor (and for-

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*Anne-Marie Cusac is a contributing writer for The Progressive, a professor of journalism at Roosevelt University, and the author of "Cruel and Unusual: The Culture of Punishment in America" (Yale, 2009; paperback 2010).*

mer prominent U.S. Republican Representative) John Kasich signed into law House Bill 133. The bill allows for leasing of state-owned land for oil and gas drilling. While a late amendment exempted nature preserves and natural areas, drills could soon bite into Ohio's state forests, wilderness areas, and state parks.

What Kasich is doing to the environment in Ohio is in line with other assaults on the environment by rightwing Republican governors. (See sidebar on page 23.)

In Ohio, the drilling could include traditional oil and gas wells, but also the horizontal and deep-shale extraction process called hydrofracking.

Hydrofracking propels large amounts of water and chemicals under high pressure to force gas deposits from deep rock.

"Fracking fluid kills everything when it gets out into the environment," says Cheryl Johncox, executive director of the Buckeye Forest Council, an environmental organization that opposes drilling in the Ohio state parks. And there are concerns about air quality near the wells. "Off-gassing is huge," she says. She mentions the volatile organic compounds and the polycarbonates in the air emissions, such as benzene and toluene.

The drilling process requires "just a phenomenal number of support vehicles," says Bob Shields, head of the Ohio chapter of the Sierra Club. "We're talking about sending casings down up to a mile. Those casings have to be trucked in." Hydrofracking also swallows water—"six million gallons per well. That has to be trucked in. That's an awful lot of trucks."

Ron Prosek, the vice president of the Network for Oil and Gas Accountability and Protection, says fracking may soon be big in Ohio. The companies are "buying up leases like crazy here," he says. A while ago, there were only seventy-two permits for the process, he says, but in the last eighteen months almost every county with significant shale deposits has

seen between 1,000 and 3,000 leases.

While those leases are on private lands, Kasich and the Ohio legislature have now opened public lands, as well.

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources sounds uncertain about opening Hocking Hills to oil and gas drilling. "You're talking about an awful lot of sensitive habitat to consider" and a lot of visitors using the park, says Laura Jones, spokesperson for the agency. "We really do strive for a balance between wise use and protection and conservation of the resources. That is our mission."

Just how the Ohio DNR will be able to regulate oil and gas leasing in state parks is also in question. Bill 133 set up a special committee to handle leasing. It will be composed of two members "recommended by a statewide organization representing the oil and gas industry," one environmentalist, the state geologist, and "one member of the public with expertise in finance or real estate." In its testimony on the bill, the Ohio DNR asked to maintain control over the leasing. But the legislature gave that power to the committee instead.

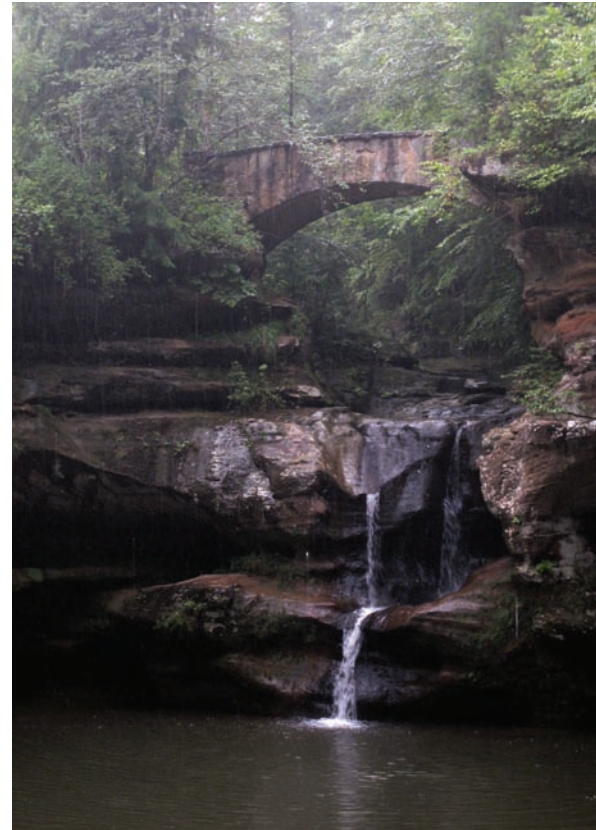
Ask people around here how they feel toward Hocking Hills State Park, and they'll tell you about their lives.

Ellen Grinsfelder's mother started an inn here in 1987 on property surrounded on three sides by the state park. "She decided that Hocking Hills was really as pretty as any place she had ever been," says Grinsfelder. "A lot of people would say that she was the pioneer of travel and tourism in the area. Her friends said she was crazy."

Grinsfelder's mother lived only four years after starting the Inn at Cedar Falls. She had cancer. "One of her last wishes was to go for a walk on top of Cedar Falls," says Grinsfelder. "We accomplished that."

Grinsfelder now runs the inn. She and her husband have expanded the place from the original nine rooms.

Six restored 1840s log cabins are available as rentals. "We did it all green—reused lumber," she says. Grinsfelder points to the dark wood floor in the room where we are sitting. Those are boards from old pallets, she says. "We collect the rainwater and use it for flushing the toilets," she adds. The Inn at Cedar Falls also



has four beehives.

The commitment to sustainability was part of her mother's vision from the beginning, says Grinsfelder. "She believed you had to give back to the land, not just take away."

Tourism in Hocking Hills is "thriving," she says. "We have guests that come three, four, five times a year just to get revived and energized by walking the state parks and us feeding their souls good food. They say they sleep better here than at home. It's the natural environment that allows that to happen."

Grinsfelder employs forty-five local people in this area of north Appalachia. Many have worked at the Inn for more than five years.

More than 200 businesses in the Hocking Hills area offer rental cabins and cottages. Other businesses include gift shops, restaurants, gas stations, pharmacies, banks, horseback riding stables, and zip-line establishments.

Nor does it include weddings. I'm walking down the paved path to Ash Cave, preoccupied with the Canadian cypress trees and falling shadows. I look up when I hear a sentence unusual for a state park. "Now, resist the urge to rub that mud into your dress," a woman with an up-do is saying to a woman in white. "When you get back, hang it up right away." So the women are making a valiant effort. The bride teeters, clutching a fistful of dress. Two other women in long, slim black gowns trot to keep up with her and assist with the bouquet. Ahead of them, a few men in vests and white shirts sling their jackets over their shoulders and saunter along with a good deal less trouble.

Hocking Hills is the wedding capital of Ohio, with an active industry to support it. Some local businesses offer wooded ceremony sites, complete with cakes, flowers, music, and honeymoon cabins. Others promise to make eloping tons of fun.

Ash Cave, 700 feet wide, with a pool below a trembling, sheer waterfall, is the favorite location for such ceremonies. I notice a crushed red petal on the path. Then the grandeur of the cavern claims my attention. The humans wandering in its recesses look tiny under the high rock arc.

**E**ric Hoffman, a professional photographer and owner of the Old Bear's Den Workshop Center, depends on Hocking Hills for his livelihood. The state park's stunning beauty serves as a backdrop for his wedding photos.

I get in touch with Hoffman because I hear he's upset about Bill 133 and its potential to bring drilling to Hocking Hills. He agrees to show me around the park.

Hoffman helps me adjust my cam-

era for the low, shifting light photographers prize. Trained as a naturalist, he points out the best place to photograph the waterfalls, a 300-year-old Canadian cypress, and an endangered red flower called the royal catchfly that clings to a ripple in the sandstone.

As we walk the winding paths near Old Man's Cave, Hoffman talks about a storm a week earlier that caused the park streams to flood violently. He points to an exposed sandstone wall. "That was not here a few weeks ago," he says. A little later, he nods toward a large pile of gravel in the river and explains that it is also a result of the recent storm. "Just looking at that, you can imagine what might happen with some of the runoff from the wells," he says. The oil and gas companies are "coming into a fragile habitat. As much as they say it's not going to have an effect, it is. No one knows what it's going to be."

When I ask Hoffman what he most loves about Hocking Hills, he selects a sound: "To listen from a porch at night and hear two barred owls calling back and forth between hills with absolutely no noise in the background is the most amazing noise you'll ever hear."

Damaged silence preoccupies those who want to keep oil and gas drilling out of Hocking Hills State Park. "The noise in the background from the machinery—it's a constant twenty-four hours a day," says Hoffman.

**T**he Myers family knows a thing or two about noise in a quiet place. They own 600 acres in Hocking County, where they operate Bear Run Inn Cabins and Cottages. They also have twelve oil wells, many now inactive. "Most of these have been drilled prior to us purchasing the property," says Phil Myers. In the 1980s, "my parents, when they first purchased some of the property, they had several wells drilled."

"When they were drilling oil across the road here, the noise and the vibration was so bad we couldn't

sleep upstairs," says Bud Myers, Phil's father. "It was shaking the windows. Out here in the country, it is so quiet, a little bit of noise drives you nuts."

Bear Run Inn, listed in *Inn Travelers Magazine* as the "Best for Most Privacy" in 2005, ordinarily offers something visitors prize—quiet. "We have people walking on our place, and they experience something they've never experienced before, which is the sound of the snow falling," says Bud Myers.

Bud Myers has seen oil spills on his property, and he points out the blackened soil as he gives me a tour.

"Hopefully, they won't have a spill," he says of the oil and gas companies. "If they do have some kind of spill, it could do a lot of damage."

Myers says the oil pumps on his property came from a Zanesville, Ohio, company called Oxford Oil. "Most likely, the few wells we have left in the Hocking Hills area are very old," says John Straker, president of Oxford Oil. It's like having a car. Once in a while, you have the possibility of having an accident." If the owner contacts the Ohio DNR about it, "the regulator is very responsive to landowner concerns." Straker says the company is "in good standing" with the Ohio DNR, and that "we're pretty aggressive about cleaning up if we know about them."

When House Bill 133 first appeared in March, lots of ordinary Ohio citizens started traveling to Columbus and talking to legislators and representatives from the oil and gas industry. Bud Myers's daughter, Gwen Corbett, made repeated trips to Columbus. Her dad and brother went, too. Corbett runs a small nature and wellness retreat on her family's property called Bear's Den Cottage.

"They wanted it to go through fast, right away, without any obstructions. That's what I felt and what I saw," says Corbett. "I told them, I feel you made your minds up a long, long time ago."

Her county depends on tourism, says Corbett. "One in seven of our jobs rely on that state park, and now

we're like, we only have that one small thing, and you're going to potentially muck it up for us."

In his testimony before the Ohio legislature, Thomas Stewart, executive vice president of the 1,500-member Ohio Oil and Gas Association, spoke specifically about the Hocking Hills State Park. "I feel it is important to note that despite claims by anti-oil and gas groups, nobody is advocating drilling oil and gas wells on properties that offer a unique experience of nature, long treasured by Ohio citizens," he said. "An example would be the Hocking Hills State Park—the Old Man's Cave area."

The bow to the power of Old Man's Cave did not mean the whole park would be free of drilling, however. "On the other hand, their suggestion that having oil and gas development in proximity to these special areas is somehow a shocking new threat that, if allowed, would desecrate the sanctity of the public trust is, at best, disingenuous," Stewart said. "A map of the Hocking Hills State Parks clearly shows that these beautiful and pristine parks have long coexisted with substantive oil and gas development. It is time to reject hyperbole and, instead, seek common interest."

In Stewart's mind, "common interest" means extracting oil and gas from state park lands, with the state benefiting from \$300 million in royalties that he projects.

In addition to Hocking Hills State Park, Stewart mentioned one other Ohio state park by name—Salt Fork. "In many ways Salt Fork is the poster child of state lands leasing," Stewart said in his testimony on Bill 133. "It is huge—consisting of 20,000 consolidated acres." But more importantly, the park almost certainly has oil and gas. "It may be the true ultimate potential for this region," said Stewart.

Salt Fork "is the one they really, really want to get their hooks into," says Prosek of the Network for Oil and Gas Accountability and Protec-

## Other Republican Governors Trash the Environment

Oil and gas drilling in Ohio's state parks offers a close look at one small part of a much larger state-level assault on the environment waged by other Republican governors.

### New Jersey Governor Chris Christie

Environment New Jersey gave Christie a D+ rating in 2010. The group's summary of the reasons: "Late last year, Governor Christie terminated funding for a new rail tunnel under the Hudson River that would allow more people to take public transit, rather than drive, to New York City. Around that same time, the governor proclaimed skepticism that humans were contributing to climate change. Then, just a week later, he signaled his desire to unravel protections for water reservoirs that serve half the state, and allow more development on previously protected land." The governor also "cut more than \$400 million from state clean energy programs."

### Florida Governor Rick Scott

Scott vetoed \$305 million for land conservation funds and wants to cut funding for restoring the Everglades. He also appointed a former power company executive to the board of the South Florida Water Management District, even though the executive's company had been fined \$640,000 for repeated environmental regulations.

### Maine Governor Paul LePage

According to the *Portland Press Herald*: "Gov. Paul LePage has proposed zoning ten million acres of northern Maine for development, repealing laws that require manufacturers to take back recyclable goods for disposal, and reversing a ban on the use of a chemical linked to cancer in children's products." LePage also advocates relaxing state standards on air emissions.

### Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker

Walker has all but nixed wind farms in Wisconsin. Three companies that were planning wind farms have now pulled out or are considering doing so.

He is also offering a sale of all state-owned power plants to private interests. Many of these plants currently violate federal clean air standards, according to the *Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel*. And he's supporting an open-pit iron ore mine up north.

Meanwhile, he refused federal high-speed railroad funds and ended loan and grant programs that encourage energy-efficient business operations.

—Anne-Marie Cusac

tion. In addition to the huge size of the park itself, “It has a lake onsite. They can use it for hydrofracking.”

The Ohio DNR also sees the park as a likely target. “Salt Fork State Park certainly holds potential, given its history,” says spokesperson Jones. There has been oil and gas drilling in the park’s past, she says, and there is a great deal of such activity in the countryside near the park.

**S**o I decide to go to Salt Fork. But first I pass the Rushing Wind Biker Church (where everyone is welcome) and pull off the highway in New Concord, Ohio, a few exits from Salt Fork. I want to visit John Glenn’s house.

There was something about John Glenn that I associated with state parks. A quality from the mid-twentieth-century United States. A belief in the public good.

At the John and Annie Glenn Historic Site, visitors can see John Glenn’s sled and ice skates, his hobby horse (“Now, why he kept that, I have no idea,” said our guide, Ron Vessels), his tricycle, family photos, the flight suit and Converse sneakers he wore on *Friendship 7*, and a radio he gave his wife-to-be, Annie, when she had the mumps in the 1930s. Glenn sold his mother’s rhubarb to raise eight dollars to buy the radio, Vessels tells us. We can also see Glenn’s senior year report card. “We covered up the B+” in Home Economics, Vessels says. Apart from the B+, Glenn had all As.

Vessels is standing on the other side of a glass case from me when he says something that gives me pause. Vessels points to an old Minolta camera. “He took the first picture from space,” he says. The photo is black and white. It captures a small, curved corner of Earth. Underneath a skim of clouds lies a visible landmass and ocean.

Unlike the well-known photograph of the entire Earth taken from *Apollo 8* in December 1968, this little black and white scrap of an image never landed on a stamp. It never became

one of the most-reproduced images in history. Nor did it propel momentum toward the first Earth Day. Yet the snapshot has a power of its own—it is a homely image of home.

Glenn just celebrated his ninetieth birthday, and he recently requalified for his pilot’s license. But in some ways, his optimism is from another time. Ohio was important back then, too. When Ohio’s Cuyahoga River started on fire in 1969, Richard Nixon realized that the people of the United States wanted to protect the natural world. Under pressure from a burgeoning mass movement, he responded by signing some of the most salient pieces of environmental legislation we have.

I asked Vessels and his co-workers whether they knew of the gas and oil drilling that could happen up at Salt Fork State Park, and what their opinions were. Ross Love, who plays the role of a boarder in the Glenn household during the tour, tosses a sentence over his shoulder. “It’s not like we can change it,” he says. “They’re going to do what they want to do.”

As for Salt Fork, “I like it,” Love says. “It’s quiet. It’s relaxing. There’s a lot of woods out there.”

**I**’ve got silence on the brain as I drive into 20,000-acre Salt Fork State Park. I pull into the ranger station, roll down the window, turn off the engine. I hear a car pass on the park road, then only locust buzz and the breeze. As Love suggested, silence is easy to get here—for now.

Then I notice two gleaming black birds with broad white bands on their shoulders. They are doing an unusual flying maneuver of lifting a few feet out of the milkweed and Queen Anne’s lace. Then they sink back to invisibility. I recognize them—bobolinks.

I grew up hearing about bobolinks. The way people talked, they seemed like ordinary birds. Yet, though I’ve seen plenty of rural birds, I missed out on the bobolink till I was in my forties and traveled to Michigan with a bunch of birders,

who knew how to find them. The Michigan bobolinks were doing the same acrobatic stunt, as if gravity gave them up just long enough so they could pop above the grasses, then claimed them again.

My experience of not seeing a supposedly common bird is almost certainly linked to the bobolink’s steep population drop, which is due, in large part, to the plowing under of our grasslands.

“The Bird of Birds is gone,” warned Emily Dickinson in one of several poems where she associated the bobolink with joy. “How nullified the Meadow—/Her Sorcerer withdrawn!”

As Ohio environmentalists point out repeatedly, Salt Fork is an unusual success story. It is a recovered strip mine. Matt Trokan, conservation program coordinator of the Ohio Sierra Club, notes the irony. In the 1960s and 1970s, the State of Ohio “put lots of money into it so they can reclaim it,” he says. “A couple of decades down the road, they change the rules so they can drill.”

“Fundamentally, this is a promise-breaker. The people were always promised the parks would be a safe haven from any development,” says Jack Shaner, public affairs director of the Ohio Environmental Council. “There’s a risk of flow out, a leak or spill. These are not unheard of events. A park is the last place you’d like it to occur.” And where, he asks, are the companies going to drill? “Not the beach. Not the bathhouse. Not the campground. You have to go to remote areas. Now you’re going to go to the very heart of what makes a park a park.” Shaner expresses deep skepticism about the plan. “We’re going back to the laboratory,” he says. “We’ll see how much the land can take.”

**W**hat can a state park offer? Public property. Public values. A commons and a communion with nature. A waterfall, a cave, the sound of snow falling, silence, a bobolink. ♦

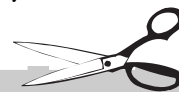
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By Elizabeth DiNovella  
Illustration by David Gothard

# The Group Behind the Republican Takeover



**Y**OU MAY HAVE HEARD ABOUT the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), which helps Republicans draft bills in statehouses. (We reported on the group last month.) But you've probably not heard of the Republican State Leadership Committee, which gets them elected in the first place.

This little-known group, formed in 2002, is the only national organization that focuses on electing Republican majorities to state legislatures. It has been active in forty-six states and has spent tens of millions of dollars. Based in Alexandria, Virginia, the committee targets legislative chambers—from Maine to Wisconsin—where there is a chance for control to change hands.

The group played a decisive role in the 2010 elections, and helped flip twenty state legislative chambers from Democrat to Republican. Republicans now control more state legislatures than at any time since 1928.

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*Elizabeth DiNovella is culture editor of The Progressive magazine. This report was produced as part of a collaborative investigative effort to expose the influence of corporate money on the political process by members of The Media Consortium, in partnership with the We the People Campaign. To read more stories from this series, visit [www.themediaconsortium.org](http://www.themediaconsortium.org).*

The committee's main tactic was to barrage the public airwaves with negative ads, much of it done at the tail end of the campaign season. GOP stalwarts such as Karl Rove and Ed Gillespie aggressively executed the battle plans through their consulting firms.

"We've had hard-fought campaigns before, but we've never seen out-of-state money drop a negativity bomb in so many races," says Ann Luther, who sits on the board of Maine Citizens for Clean Elections. "It was shocking."

Able to raise unlimited funds, the Republican State Leadership Committee is a stalking horse for corporate America. Top contributors to the group include Altria (formerly Philip Morris), Anheuser-Busch, Citigroup, Comcast Cable, Exxon Mobil, Home Depot, Monsanto, PhRMA, U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Verizon, and WellPoint.

The Republican State Leadership Committee played a pivotal role in Wisconsin, enabling Republicans to flip both houses of the state legislature and the governorship from Democrat to Republican last November. The group bet big—and won big—even though it was the first time it spent money on legislative races in the state. It dropped almost one million dollars in five races, and won four of the seats.

The group had originally registered as a political action committee in Wisconsin in 2009. But it ended the PAC after the January 2010 U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Citizens United* and formed as a corporation making independent disbursements.

In 2010, the Wisconsin Government Accountability Board created rule 1.91, which required independent groups to file reports on political campaign spending.

"1.91 was a rule to basically, in the wake of *Citizens United*, say that a corporation had to register and report information," says Reid Mag-

ney, spokesman for the Government Accountability Board.

The committee was the top spending 1.91 organization in the fall 2010 election, according to its filings with the Government Accountability Board. Its filings also reveal where its income came from: the Republican State Leadership Committee.

"We have all these groups spending millions of dollars in Wisconsin, and the source of income is themselves," says Mike McCabe, executive director of the Wisconsin Democracy Campaign. "The true origin of the money is being concealed."

Wisconsin does not have disclosure laws that are geared for corporate election spending because in 1905 the state legislature banned corporate contributions to political campaigns. The 2010 Supreme Court ruling essentially overturned that law. "Now, we are left with corporate election spending but no disclosure laws," says McCabe. "We are left in a very vulnerable position."

Most of the Republican State Leadership Committee's money went to oppose candidates, not support them. It spent five times more money tearing down Democratic candidates than building up its own Republican candidates.

"We'll be providing air cover," Chris Jankowski, current president of the committee, boasted to *The Wall Street Journal*.

It certainly did. It blasted central Wisconsin's airwaves and spent \$326,700 on negative campaigns against Russ Decker, who was the Democratic majority leader at the time. It was the only group to target Decker.

It also went after Democrat Kathleen Vinehout with a glossy direct mail package that asked: "Why would senator Kathleen Vinehout allow Wisconsin convicts out of prison early?" The mailing resembles a poster for a horror film: A young, white woman has a terrified look on her face as a man's hand covers her mouth. The accusation was based on

Vinehout's support for the 2009-2011 state budget, which included the early release program.

Two D.C.-based companies handled these TV and radio ads and received media consulting fees: TenCapitol and SRCP Media. TenCapitol has a client list that includes the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the Wisconsin Chamber of Commerce, the Michigan Chamber of Commerce, McDonald's, and PhRMA.

SRCP Media was founded by Greg Stevens, who ran John McCain's 2000 campaign. Stevens created the famous Michael Dukakis

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sitting in a tank ad for the George H. W. Bush campaign. SRCP has done work for Senators Bill Frist, Lindsey Graham, Saxby Chambliss, and the pro-Iraq invasion advocacy group Freedom Watch. *Roll Call* named SRCP “the largest and most influential Republican media firm.”

**T**he Republican State Leadership Committee files with the IRS as a nonprofit “527” group. (The 527 number refers to the tax code.) This status gives the group flexibility. There are no upper limits on contributions or spending limits, and any type of donor can contribute.

During the 2010 election cycle, the Republican State Leadership Committee ranked fourth among 527 groups in expenditures at \$29 million. The biggest spender during that election cycle was the Republican Governors Association, which shelled out \$131 million, followed by the Democratic Governors Association (\$55 million), and the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (\$46 million).

IRS filings show the committee has been heavily backed by big business since its inception. Many of the same companies that give money to the committee also give money to ALEC and the Republican Governors Association.

Its biggest contributor by far is the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, which has given more than \$11 million. Devon Energy Corporation has given nearly \$2 million. Tobacco (Altria, Reynolds), pharmaceutical (GlaxoSmithKlein, AstraZeneca), and health insurance (WellPoint) industries all give money.

Ed Gillespie, former Republican National Committee chairman, leads the Republican State Leadership Committee. He also contracts with it. During 2010, his company, Ed Gillespie Strategies, received regular monthly consulting fees of \$16,667.

American Crossroads, another 527 group, has donated \$600,000 to the

committee, ranking within the top twenty-five contributors. American Crossroads is the brainchild of Karl Rove and Gillespie.

527s groups such as the Republican State Leadership Committee and the Republican Governors Associations are ways to shuffle money around, says Rich Robinson of the Michigan Campaign Finance Network. The groups act as clearing-houses “to wipe fingerprints off the money,” he says. Thus, voters are unable to easily decipher which companies are influencing their state elections.

**T**he committee played a major role in the mud fest that characterized Maine’s 2010 legislative races. It spent \$400,000 on five Maine state senate races. All five Republicans won. And all five disapproved of the group’s intrusion into state politics.

“Their spending was roundly denounced,” says Alison Smith, president of Maine Citizens for Clean Elections. “To compound the big spending, it was just very negative attack ads. The ads were below the belt type messages.”

The ads were so disparaging that one of the Democratic candidates, James Schatz, filed a libel lawsuit against the group. (These ads were handled by Crossroads Media, an affiliate of American Crossroads.)

The committee’s ad accused Schatz, who served as a selectman in Blue Hill, of voting to cancel the town’s Independence Day fireworks and of voting to pay \$10,000 to political organization instead. Yet the opposite was true: Schatz had voted for the fireworks. And the \$10,000 donation was voted on by people of Blue Hill at a town meeting.

Judge D. Brock Hornby ruled against Schatz, due to the lack of actual malice. The judge concluded “this is the classic case recognized by the Supreme Court in describing the sometimes negative consequences of First Amendment protection.” But

the judge also noted that “if the allegations of the amended complaint are true, James Schatz behaved as a responsible public official . . . whereas the Republican State Leadership Committee played the juvenile role of ‘gotcha’ politics in order to win an election.”

Frank Langley, Schatz’s Republican opponent who won the election, criticized the ads. “This cost me votes and cost me the respect of a lot of people in my community who thought I had something to do with it,” Langley told *Down East*. “What bothers me the most is that people can just come along and drop a bomb from 40,000 feet, and I have to pick up the pieces.”

All the candidates who were targeted by the negative ads were eligible for public funding under Maine’s clean election laws. However, the Republican State Leadership Committee failed to file its expenditure reports on time, which slowed the disbursement of the matching funds. Because of this tardiness, Maine’s Commission on Governmental Ethics and Election Practices levied a \$26,000 fine against the committee, the biggest fine ever levied.

“The late independent expenditure reports by the RSLC resulted in a delay of more than \$160,000 in matching funds to five State Senate candidates,” says a report by Maine’s ethics commission. “These delays are significant within the final two weeks of a campaign when it is critical for candidates to have full control over the timing and content of their campaign messages.”

**W**hat happened in Wisconsin and Maine wasn’t unique. The committee devoted significant resources in 2010 toward Michigan, New York, and Ohio.

The GOP picked up twenty seats in Michigan, and now is the majority party in the House. (The Republicans control the senate, too, and the governorship.)

The Republican State Leadership Committee spent \$1.4 million in four races for the New York State Senate and were able to pick up two. The GOP now controls the senate chamber.

The committee spent almost \$1 million in the Ohio races, targeting six and winning five. Most of these districts went for President Obama in 2008. The GOP now controls both chambers in Ohio, and the new governor is a Republican, too.

These new Republican majorities, along with the already-existing ones, put the GOP in charge of redistricting Congressional maps in seventeen states, including all of the House seats from the swing states of Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin.

Looking ahead to the 2012 election, the committee is expected to continue to focus on swing states such as Colorado, Florida, Nevada, Ohio, Virginia, and Wisconsin.

“Wisconsin remains a battleground state, and the RSLC will be aggressively involved in increasing our majority in 2012,” said Jankowski in a statement after Wisconsin’s summer recall elections. (The committee did not return phone calls or e-mails for comment.)

This summer it launched the Future Majority Project, an initiative to get women, young people, and Latinos to run for office as Republicans. It has set a goal to recruit at least 100 new Hispanic Republican candidates.

“The RSLC believes that cultivating change is best achieved through a bottom-up, state-level approach,” said Jankowski in a press release.

The Republican State Leadership Committee may try to portray itself as being grassroots, but its plans are executed by D.C. insiders and paid for by big business. ♦

## Who's Afraid of Frances Fox Piven?

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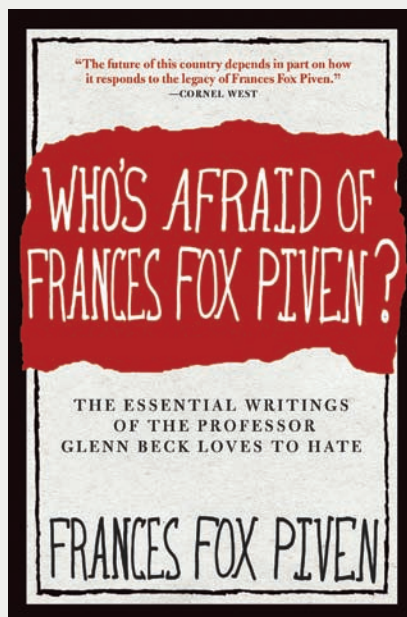
How is it that **FRANCES FOX PIVEN**, a distinguished university professor, past president of the American Sociological Association, and recipient of numerous awards and accolades for her work, could suddenly find herself all over the Internet—and Fox TV—as the subject of a vicious and relentless hate campaign spearheaded by darling of the right Glenn Beck?

Is she “an enemy of the constitution” (Glenn Beck)? Or is she “the embodiment of the best of American democracy” (*The Nation*)?

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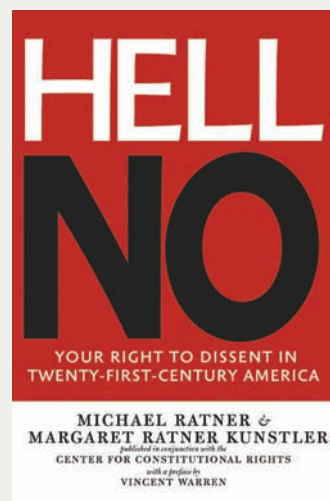
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By Dennis Bernstein

Illustration by Daniel Morgenstern

# Media Activist Runs for Congress

I FIRST ENCOUNTERED NORMAN Solomon nearly thirty years ago, when I was teaching writing to prisoners in a conservative community of upstate New York. One day, I opened up a local newspaper and saw an op-ed he had penned on the murder of a young engineer named Ben Linder by U.S.-supported counter-revolutionaries in Nicaragua. It was a time when very few in the mainstream were questioning President Reagan's policies, and it meant a great deal to me.

"As the glare of publicity fades, those of us with personal memories of Ben Linder are left to ponder the meaning of his death," Solomon wrote. "Why would anyone want to kill a gentle helpful man for working to provide electricity to a small village in an impoverished country?"

Since those early Reagan days, Solomon has been a biting media critic, a syndicated columnist, and the author of a number of books. And for more than a dozen years, he has directed the Institute for Public Accuracy, which he founded to present a wider range

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*Dennis Bernstein is the executive producer of Flashpoints, an award-winning daily news magazine syndicated over Pacifica Radio, and a contributor to Consortiumnews.com. His first collection of poetry, "Special Ed.," will be published in January.*



of voices that mainstream and alternative journalists can tap into.

Early this year, Solomon announced he was setting aside his distinguished career to become a Democratic candidate for Congress. He is vying for the seat soon to be vacated by the retiring Representative Lynn Woolsey, in the new gerrymandered District 2 that stretches from the Golden Gate Bridge hundreds of miles north to the California-Oregon border.

I caught up with candidate Solomon at a recent house party and fundraiser, in Mill Valley, an affluent suburb about fifteen miles north of the Golden Gate Bridge. I asked him why he decided to make such a drastic move.

“For more than forty years, I’ve been writing to change the system; now I’m running to change the system,” he said. “For decades, we’ve seen one disaster after another as progressives have routinely left the electoral field to corporate Democrats and their Republican colleagues. We desperately need to go beyond the false choice between staying true to ideals and winning public office. Progressives can—and must—do both.”

Writer and social historian Martin Lee co-authored Solomon’s second book, *Unreliable Sources*. Lee, who lives in Healdsburg, right in the heart of the new Congressional district, says Solomon’s bid was a natural evolution.

“For Norman, media criticism was always a vehicle for promoting social justice,” says Lee.

**O**n Labor Day weekend at California’s state capitol in Sacramento, Solomon was one of a few white faces ensconced in a sea of red United Farm Worker flags. It was the climax of a 200-mile pilgrimage for farmworker rights, led by UFW President Arturo Rodriguez. While Solomon was present to garner support for his Congressional run, he’s no stranger to this movement.

“When I was seventeen years old in 1969, I was passing out Boycott Grape solidarity fliers in support of the late

Cesar Chavez’s historic push to unionize farmworkers across the nation,” he tells me in the sweltering noon heat. “I love a good glass of wine. But there is no wine on the planet wonderful enough to wash away the bitterness of injustice in the fields.”

Miguel Gavilan Molina, who toiled in the fields as a child farmworker and has played a key role in the creation of the first rural day labor center to protect migrant workers in Graton, California, says he was impressed by Solomon’s “unrelenting support” for farmworkers and day laborers.

“No one else has been out there for the farmworkers like Solomon,” says Molina. “All the other politicians are busy clinking glasses with the growers, while Norman is taking a moral position for what he believes in, and beating the drum for it wherever he goes.”

Solomon has also been on the cutting edge of the resistance to nuclear power and nuclear weapons. He is quick to make the point that the notion of the peaceful atom is a “myth.” He says he supports the immediate closure of all nuclear power plants, in California and all over the United States.

Solomon has been arrested dozens of times protesting nuclear weapons and nuclear power, including once in the mid-eighties when he boldly sat in at the U.S. Embassy in Moscow after the United States failed to sign on to a nonproliferation treaty backed by Mikhail Gorbachev.

Over the years, Solomon has stood side by side with Pentagon Papers whistleblower Daniel Ellsberg in speaking out strongly against the way the Israeli government has mistreated, abused, and brutally imprisoned Israeli nuclear whistleblower Mordechai Vanunu. Now Ellsberg is standing behind Solomon in his bid for Congress.

“No one could better represent me in Congress,” Ellsberg said in his endorsement in September. “Norman will not be silent when Democratic leaders lose their way or their nerve. He’ll be a strong, independent

voice for economic justice, civil liberties, and rigorous environmental protection—and a determined foe of the militarism that is depleting our society in countless ways.”

That’s if he gets to Congress. He faces a steep challenge against the establishment Democrat, California state representative Jared Huffman, and two others just to win the primary.

**S**olomon says he’s taking no corporate money, but he hasn’t hesitated to welcome into his campaign some Hollywood star power, in the name of Sean Penn. His relationship with Penn goes back some ten years, just before the United States invaded Iraq. Penn and Solomon traveled together then to Iraq and Iran.

In late August, Penn headlined a campaign fundraising event at McNear’s Mystic Theatre in Petaluma, about forty miles north of the Golden Gate Bridge. To an enthusiastic audience of some 300 Solomon supporters, Penn recalled the trip to Iran.

“As hundreds, then thousands, gathered around the circle of singing women, suddenly it was the appearance of the special police,” Penn said. “And then out came the batons. As things got chaotic, I briefly lost Norman in the crowd. I was about twenty-five yards from getting to that inner circle of women who were taking bludgeons to the heads. And then I saw Norman, not flinching, standing directly beside them, and he stayed through it all.”

In a recent stump speech, the typically mild-mannered and soft-spoken Solomon—who describes himself as a “Green New Deal” politician—got worked up a bit as he laid down some of his core beliefs.

“I believe that quality education, adequate health care, consumer protection, civil liberties, and environmental safeguards are not frills or mere privilege—they should be our birthrights as Americans,” Solomon said. “It’s not ‘national security’ to have our schools crumbling, homes foreclosed on, and deficits skyrocketing.” ♦

*by David Barsamian*

# Jodie Evans

Jodie Evans is a whirlwind of energy and enthusiasm. Ever on the move, ever planning new demonstrations, campaigns, and boycotts, she puts the active in activist. Visibility is not a problem for her or for Code Pink, the feminist anti-war organization she co-founded with Medea Benjamin. It has a knack of getting into the faces of the powerful and breaking through the media silences.

“We’re trying to find new and creative ways to disrupt power,” Evans says.

She and Benjamin co-edited the book *Stop the Next War Now: Effective Responses to Violence and Terrorism*. And Evans served as the executive producer of the documentaries *The Most Dangerous Man in America* (about Daniel Ellsberg) and *The People Speak* (based on Howard Zinn’s work). She is also the board

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*David Barsamian is the founder and director of Alternative Radio in Boulder, Colorado. He interviewed Chris Hedges in the August issue.*

chair of the Women's Media Center.

She keeps her buoyancy and equanimity despite being the target of vituperative attacks and threats. Vitriol from the Internet site Radio Patriot labels her as "an agent of influence for the anti-American governments of Iran, Cuba, and Venezuela, as well as Middle Eastern terrorists." She is slandered and demeaned sexually. But she carries on undeterred.

A current Code Pink project she is involved with is the boycott of Ahava products, an Israeli cosmetics company using resources from occupied Palestinian land. As a result of picketing and other measures, some stores in North America have dropped Ahava.

Looking at the United States, she says, "We're watching it crumble. But we have to be more vocal and stronger than ever. We have to rely on ourselves and remember what it is to be citizens because that's how we are going to get what we want."

I was glad to finally catch up with her, as she has quite the travel schedule. I talked with her in Boulder on a Sunday evening in August when she was in the Colorado Rockies for a conference.

## Q • What kindled your activism?

**Jodie Evans:** In 1970, I was a maid in one of the big hotels in Las Vegas, and we got organized to march for a living wage. Jane Fonda came and marched with us. In that process, I found my power. And we won. Then, as my friends from high school started to go off to war, I became an anti-war activist and used a lot of the skills I got from being organized as a maid. I joined the McGovern campaign, and turned eighteen a month before the election. I got to be one of the first eighteen-year-olds to vote. I still remember how powerful that was.

## Q: What was the spark that launched Code Pink?

**Evans:** In May of 2002, about thirty-five of us who were activists got together, and we called ourselves the Unreasonable Women for the Earth. By September, Bush was trying to frighten us with Code Orange and Code Red and Code Yellow. One day, as the Iraq War resolution was going through Congress, Medea, Diane Wilson, and I got on the phone, and we said, "OK, we've got to get to Washington." We found out through another girlfriend that Bush was going to have all the members of Congress in the Rose Garden the next morning, and he was going to give them the resolution, and it was just going to go through Congress like lightning. So we got together that night and we said, "We're going to call ourselves Code Hot Pink." But the problem was, when you went to the Internet, it was a porn site. So we changed the name

to Code Pink.

The next day we hung a big banner on the White House that said "No War in Iraq." And Diane got up on the pole and she wouldn't come down. The media from the Rose Garden came running out, and it was on all the morning news. We then went to the steps of the Capitol at lunchtime. We had painted pink doves of peace and put them on our bras and took our shirts off. And on our bellies we wrote "Read My Tits. No War in Iraq." Because we had taken our shirts off, all the cameras in the Congressional hearing were on us.

That's pretty much what Code Pink has done since the beginning. We're in the face of power, wherever it is.

## Q: How big is Code Pink?

**Evans:** Right now, we have about 200,000 people who get our e-mails each week, and we have about 100 local chapters, but we have a small staff of five. We feel that we're just the container to give people the tools for activism, and then it's really the locals that create the color and the intelligence and the vibrancy that is Code Pink. Our purpose is to end war and bring those resources back to the life-sustaining needs of our community.

## Q: The so-called war on terror has been going on now for more than ten years. Where are we?

**Evans:** We've created a more dangerous world. We've created more violence. We've unraveled the fabric of our own society. We've watched everything get worse. We've watched countries be destroyed, and we've watched war become the answer to every question.

## Q: The Bush Administration said it wanted to help women in Afghanistan when it invaded. The Indian writer and activist Arundhati Roy said at the time of the Afghan invasion that it was possibly the first time in history that the U.S. Marine Corps was claiming to be a feminist organization. What's your reaction to that?

**Evans:** It's devastating to even think that they say they're helping these women. You can't imagine what life is like for these women in Afghanistan. To help them would have been to educate them, would have been to restore their country, would have been to create structures. Everything is in shambles. The only place that's safe is Kabul. And the only women that anyone speaks to are the women inside of Kabul. Of course, they feel safe, so they want American soldiers to stay. So it becomes a very complex

issue, even for women's organizations. They say we're in Afghanistan for the women. They've done nothing for the women. I spoke to some of the women in Afghanistan. They said, "We don't need more soldiers. We need police."

**Q: Tell me about your "Create, Not Hate" program.**

**Evans:** We have a "Ten Years and Counting Campaign," and part of that is "Create, Not Hate." What we're doing, with a coalition of other organizations, is going into communities and saying, "Through your art, your theater, your music, your cultural center, explain what these last ten years have cost you, have cost your community, have cost our country, have cost the world." What's beautiful is the experience of creating art together, the experience of singing together or dancing together or creating theater together. That's enriching. It gives you something juicy back. And then, out of that, who knows what happens?

**Q: What's the state of the women's movement today?**

**Evans:** I'm so excited by women right now, not just in America but globally. Women really are coming into their own. We're standing on the shoulders of forty years of hard and messy work. But that doesn't mean the patriarchy isn't alive and well. I'm the chair of the Women's Media Center. It was started by Gloria Steinem and Jane Fonda and Robin Morgan to make the female half of the population visible. About 97 percent of the media is created by men.

**Q: Maureen Dowd of *The New York Times* quipped recently that Obama's "Yes, we can!" slogan has devolved into "Hey, we might." You were an early supporter of the President, and you've met with him. Such people as Norman Solomon and Cornel West are using the word "betrayal" to describe the Obama Presidency. What happened?**

**Evans:** I was way ahead of them. In 2007, when Obama started to run, I wanted to support a black man for President, I wanted to support an anti-war activist for President. I thought it would be amazing while we were at war with Iraq and Afghanistan to have someone leading the country who said he was against war.

By the general election, he had started talking about Afghanistan as "the good war," and I had pulled back. As a matter of fact, when I did go to



JOHANNA GOODMAN

"I'm so excited by women right now, not just in America but globally."

events (because my husband continued to support him), I confronted him and said, “There is no such thing as a good war.” I took the opportunity to really get under his skin and make him uncomfortable.

Then, at the Inaugural, Code Pink was the only organization that was out there against Obama. We had our little pink ribbons on our fingers. And then we did can-cans outside of all the balls. “Yes, we can end war.”

We’ve been in Washington constantly. We haven’t stopped pushing. And we haven’t lost the courage to speak out against him, which has been hard, because people are, like, “Oh, give him a chance.” Why do you give him a chance? The writing is already on the wall. And we watched the anti-war movement slowly just evaporate with Obama coming in and putting everyone to sleep. The betrayal was so shocking for people. They didn’t know what to do with it.

People are, like, “Well, he’s trying.” No, he’s not trying. He’s giving in constantly. There is no leadership there. And you saw it early on. He compromises before he’s at the table. The Republicans are even shocked at what they get from him. Something happened when Obama got elected, and the fight left a lot of people. I don’t know why. I said, “Why are we not screaming in the streets?” And their attitude was, “Well, because, you know, we don’t want to lose those invitations to the White House.”

**Q: The seduction of access.**

**Evans:** The advantage we have as Code Pink is that we have no access to power, and we have no desire to have access to power. Lots of people run inside-outside games. And I don’t know that you can. Because if you’re trying to play an inside game, having that power and that access is something that you will compromise to get.

**Q: You’ve defended Bradley Manning and WikiLeaks. Why?**

**Evans:** Almost nobody is telling the truth. And the truth tellers are put in jail. Bradley Manning. WikiLeaks. What are we afraid of? We’re afraid of the truth. We’re pretending that we live in a democracy, and we’re pretending we’re free. The insanity is that we live inside of the false stories that we tell each other.

Whistle-blowers are being prosecuted more aggressively under the Obama Justice Department than under Bush. We have a campaign called Truth Set Free. Our first job around Bradley was just to let the public know that he exists and that he was held in

solitary confinement and was held naked at night in Quantico for almost a year. That somebody who tells us the truth, who exposes what we’re doing, was being treated this way is barbaric.

**Q: You come out of the Democratic Party. You worked for Governor Jerry Brown of California in his first administration. What about breaking the two-party duopoly?**

**Evans:** I would love to. I ran Jerry Brown’s Presidential campaign in 1992, which was focused on campaign finance reform. If we didn’t change campaign finance, then it didn’t matter what you believed in or what you worked for, the corporations would fund the opposite. And that’s what we’ve seen. After I ran that campaign, I left the Democratic Party, because I thought it was part of the problem. I’ve since been a Nader supporter; I have been in the Green Party.

**Q: Can we use the master’s tools, like elections, to dismantle the master’s house?**

**Evans:** Not while they’re being stolen by corporations and funded by corporations. Not after *Citizens United*. It’s going to get worse. The corporations own the elections and they’re manipulating the masses. We have to come up with a new system, because this one is broken. That’s why I work very hard to create new patterns. I don’t know that I believe in the structure anymore. I feel like it needs a revolution, not another party. The structure is so corroded that we’re saying words that are meaningless and pretending they exist, like “democracy” and “freedom.” There are all these words that get thrown around, and they don’t exist. We need a new politics and a new economy.

**Q: Where are the fissures in the power structure that could be cracked into and widened?**

**Evans:** There is no fissure until the people stand up and say, “No more!” Because right now it’s crack cocaine for the military, for the people in Congress, for the people in the White House. And until people get in the streets and start telling the truth about what’s happening, and start screaming it and yelling it, there’s nothing that’s going to happen. It’s got to happen in the streets.

**Q: Did you see some of that in Wisconsin?**

**Evans:** Yes. And look at it. It was impressive. I think Wisconsin is what started to wake up activists again.

You can really feel it now: It's people taking power into their own hands and coming up with ideas and being a citizens' brigade. It's open-source, it's inspiring, and it's not controlled at the top.

I think the Arab Spring was part of the inspiration for Wisconsin and reminded people of the power of their voice and of being engaged and of their own responsibility. It's more complicated in the United States, because we don't have a dictator that we can dethrone. It's a whole system that is corrupt, and the whole system isn't holding anyone accountable. If we don't prosecute these war criminals, what's the next horrible thing they can do? As anyone knows, if you're not held accountable, you think you can get away with it, and it becomes OK.

**Q: You've made a point about pursuing Bush and Cheney and other high officials.**

**Evans:** Yes, a lot of what we've been doing at Code Pink is around our war criminals campaign. Because they got off scot-free. The first book that came out was Karl Rove's, and I disrupted his first two book events. He had to totally transform his book tour. He could no longer speak to audiences. He really was afraid of us. Now we have Cheney's book. We're always trying to find ways to engage people. We're always trying to find ways that we can disturb power. If we can't put them in jail, at least we can tell them someone's watching and that we know they're war criminals.

We have bookmarks that you can print out on your printer. You put them in the book and you move the book to the crime section. When somebody buys the book, inside it is the bookmark saying the person who wrote the book is a war criminal. So we find every way we can to educate the public and to keep power nervous. ♦

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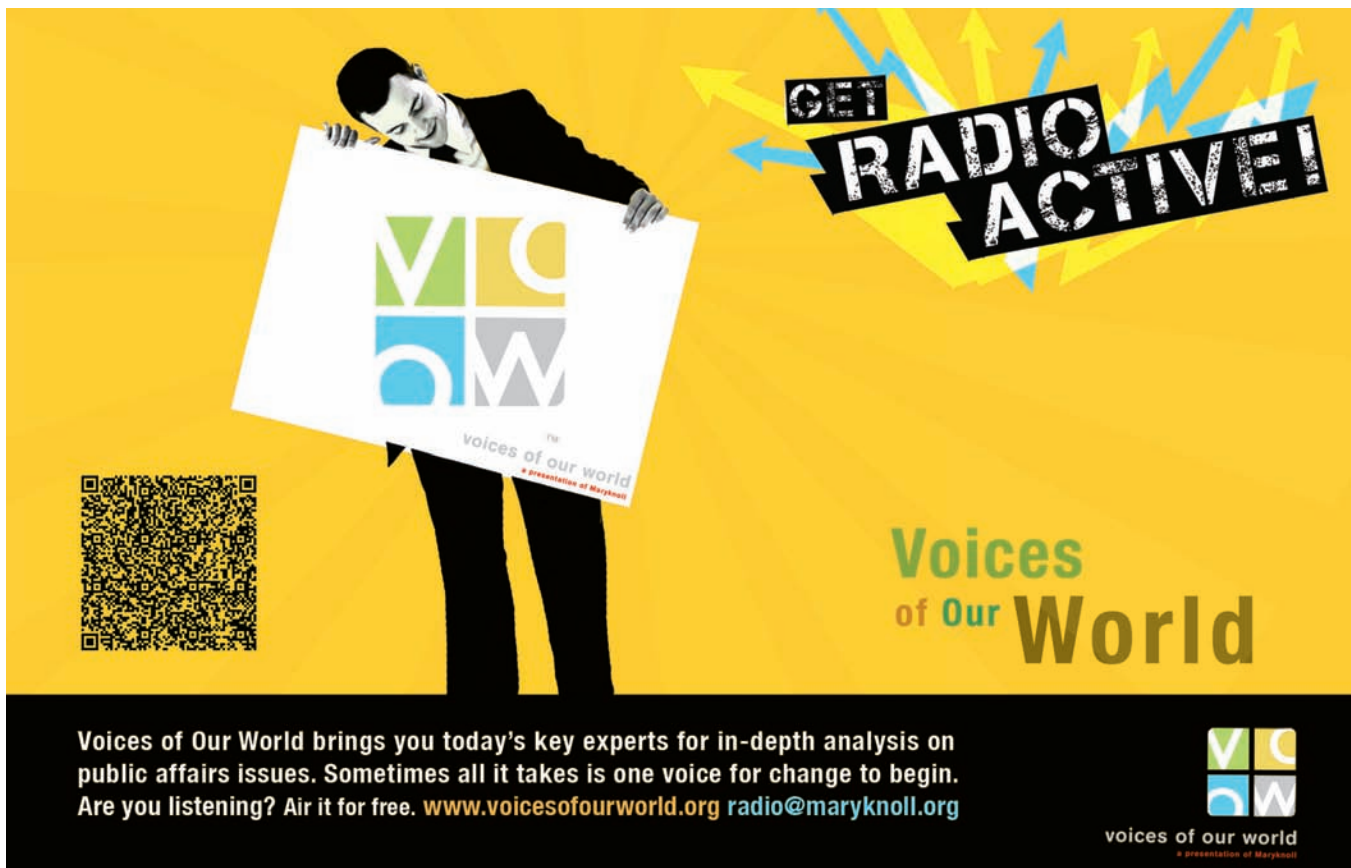
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# Poem

## The Object Happening

Far too often we'd arrive just before death  
and the blood's evacuations. Always  
there'd be two half circles of men around:  
soldiers at an outer orbit, thinking  
only of the footprints used to get there,  
and the family or the people who knew  
the man repeating *There is no god*  
*but Allah*. And the dying, refusing,  
still trying to stand, staring up at each  
of us as if we were torturers.

This day, with just six of us, we would have  
to move with speed into the mud-brick village  
to see what it was we thought we had heard—  
a mortar round or rocket but smokeless  
and east of Kabul, east of Jalalabad  
up in the high croplands of Hindu Kush.

Outside a low house we saw her, the girl,  
not twelve, covered in blood that was half dry.  
She was not crying nor was she in pain  
with not one wound that anyone could see.  
It was her older brother's blood, we learned,  
thick in her hair and reeking of iron.

They'd been flying his box kite in the fields.  
He left the path to set it in the wind  
to please her, he did this, to see her laugh  
at its flight, a thing of sticks and plastic.

He triggered a mine, and I imagine  
that from a great distance a man setting  
a mine might look as if he is planting  
something kind as an almond tree or peach.

She saw it jump out of the ground and hover  
like a demon, she said, then the ground opened  
like a small mouth, then an orange deafness.

She would not leave him there with the evil birds  
so she carried her brother's body  
down to the empty village, piece by piece.  
She carried him down—three appalling trips.

We saw nothing in the sky as we left—  
nothing but vultures gathering, regardless,  
but since that day, for the rest of my stay,  
anything at all that waved in the wind,  
waved like the kite of the Pashtun boy.

—*Eliot Khalil Wilson*

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*Eliot Khalil Wilson is the author of "The Saint of Letting Small Fish Go" (Cleveland State University Press). He currently lives in Denver.*

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# The Ha-Ha Response



In late 2010, British Prime Minister David Cameron announced a plan to survey the well-being of the residents of the United Kingdom.

To gauge their happiness, Britain's independent national statistician would design subjective questions—such as “Don't you just hate multiculturalism?”—to add to an existing annual household survey. Those answers would be bundled with more objective answers to give a fuller picture of quality of life in Britain. For the fullest picture, I recommend checking the rain gauges.

“It's time we focused not just on GDP but on G W B—general well-being,” Cameron said. I was happy the Prime clarified the “GWB” because for me, GWB still means George W. Bush, and while George is thriving in his Dallas assisted living, the United States is neither doing nor being well. And sure it's sunny in Texas, but if you check, the rain gauges have melted despite Pope Perry's rainmaking revival meeting and Presidential campaign opener.

Cameron proposed his survey before the expensive, excessive smashing of protests, the voracious

money pit of the London Summer Olympics, and the Murdoch debacle. Shutting down the *News of the World* should make everyone happier. I know I feel better when I don't read the *New York Post*.

Given the events of the summer, I thought for sure the survey would be canceled. But somehow, a recent Oxford study on laughter seems to have squeaked through before govern-

*Simpsons*. Apparently, comedy multiculturalism is OK. After viewing, participants were tested and shown to have a greater resistance to pain.

Pain resistance is one way scientists measure the presence of endorphins. Evolutionary psychologists posit that jonesing for those feel-good effects is hereditary. The pleasure of one-on-one primate grooming strengthened social bonding and aided their survival. Human social laughter is “grooming at a distance.” Primates make a panting sound instead of a distinctly human ha-ha sound but the distance between pant-pant and ha-ha is a short “They killed Kenny!” away.

Cameron hopes to use the results to craft new public policy—Eddie Izzard for head of the exchequer!

What strikes me, though, is how the impulse to “laugh with” has devolved into “laugh at.” What else are austerity measures but laughing at the pain of the poor, immigrants, the uninsured, the elderly, the homeless, the unemployed?

In the United States, we don't need to survey the national mood. Here, the devolutionaries mock, “How's that pursuit of happiness thingie workin' for ya?” Fortunately, there is growing resistance. We may be a quart low on endorphins, but there is nothing a little laughter with our friends—and a lot of organizing—won't cure. ♦



KELLY MUDGE

ment funds were diverted to Libya.

It was a bare-bones study, with none of that highfalutin analysis of cerebral or subversive humor. Psychologists went right for the ha-ha response. Participants were shown comedy excerpts not from Monty Python's “Dead Parrot” sketch but from *Friends*, *South Park*, and *The*

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Kate “*She's not dead, she's pining*” Clinton is a humorist.

# Advantage Union



When we think about the pro tennis tour—with its starched whites, seven-figure paydays, and country club environs—the first thing that pops up isn't, "Those guys need a union." In other sports—like the remorseless brutality of boxing or the death march of professional cycling—the need for a union where none exists seems like common sense. But surely not in the genteel land of tennis.

Think again. There is a growing roar among the top players in the game that they will organize and go on strike if their demands are not heard.

What demands, you may ask? During the U.S. Open, players had to take the court for three consecutive days to make up for rain delays, and they had to play on wet and dangerous surfaces for part of the tournament. They then were given one day off before having to fly to Europe for the Davis Cup.

A strike "is a possibility," said Andy Murray, the world's number four player. "Let's hope it doesn't come to that, but I'm sure the players will consider it. We need to have some say in what goes on in our sport. . . . We just want things to change, really small things. Two or three weeks off during the year, a few less tournaments each year, which I don't think is unreasonable."

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*Sport in Society and the Northeastern University School of Journalism have selected Dave Zirin as the winner of this year's Excellence in Sports Journalism in Print/Online Media. His newest book, in collaboration with John Carlos, is "The John Carlos Story," from Haymarket Books.*

The constant rain and chaotic schedule at the U.S. Open brought much of the ongoing griping of the pro tennis tour out into the open. The great Rafael Nadal, Murray, and star U.S. player Andy Roddick confronted tournament referee Brian Earley when they were rushed onto a damp court they were told was dry. After Earley insisted this wouldn't happen again, water began to actually seep through the cracks of Louis Armstrong Stadium the following day. It was so bad



PATRICK MARTINEZ

that announcers John McEnroe, Brad Gilbert, and Chris Evert openly talked on the telecast about the importance of getting a union so players could protect their very safety. McEnroe even went on a six-minute discourse—an unheard of amount of time on broadcast television—to discuss the history of tennis players who had tried to organize. He ended by saying, "There is no player union, and that's the crux of the issue."

It's understandable why some might not be overly sympathetic to the players. But whether you are Nadal, who is trying to become one of

the best players in the history of the sport, or if you are a low-ranked athlete trying to make your way, these are terrible conditions that risk your entire livelihood. Tennis pros move their bodies with such violent torque that playing on a wet court could shear the ligaments in your knees and shoulders with one slip.

Also, playing three consecutive days for a player of Nadal's intensity is the equivalent of asking a marathoner to run twenty-six miles for three consecutive days. The Association of Tennis Professionals circuit isn't a country club tour; it's more like a sweatshop. Players are treated like scenery for television broadcasts, and there is no controlling authority that looks out for their interests. As Nadal said later on ESPN, "They know it's a lot of money, and we are just part of the show. They are working for that, not for us."

You might think that if players of Nadal, Murray, and Roddick's stature are unhappy, change would be in the offing. But tennis has faced down angry stars in the past. Stan Smith boycotted the opportunity to repeat as Wimbledon champion in 1973 to protest the suspension of Nikola Pilic by the Yugoslav tennis federation. And in 1989, Ivan Lendl sat in at the doors of the U.S. Open, according to McEnroe.

The simple fact is that unless all the players organize together, the conditions on the tennis tour will never improve.

This is a reality that all the players seem to be realizing. It's a reality that goes by the name of "solidarity."

After Nadal spoke on ESPN, the great Serena Williams sent out a tweet, "Preach Rafael Nadal preach."

It's a new day on the tour. ♦

# What's Wrong with School Reform

## Class Warfare: Inside the Fight to Fix America's Schools

By Steven Brill

Simon & Schuster. 478 pages. \$28.

### By Ruth Conniff

Steven Brill has a thing for energetic young Ivy League grads, whom he refers to throughout his influential new book as “the best and the brightest.”

Teach for America alumni, hedge fund millionaires and philanthropic billionaires who fund school-reform groups, and school administrators who take a break from lucrative careers to whip urban school systems into shape—these are the heroes of this highly readable narrative by the investigative journalist, lawyer, and Yale journalism prof.

Brill introduces us to Dave Levin, who grew up on Park Avenue and went to Yale before co-founding the Knowledge Is Power Program. He describes Levin bantering with low-income students on a sidewalk in the Bronx, as if “being here was no big deal, no more out of the ordinary than meeting someone for squash at the Yale Club.”

We spend a lot of time with Joel Klein, former New York City schools chancellor, “one of those Ivy Leaguers with an off-the-charts résumé that suggests that if the best and the brightest can do anything, he can probably do anything better.”

Throughout the book, “the best and the brightest” do battle with the forces of mediocrity—those dullards who take up space and waste money, time, and students’ lives while waiting to retire with cushy benefits, thanks to the teachers’ union.

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*Ruth Conniff is the political editor of The Progressive.*

No doubt about it, the unions are public enemy number one for Brill’s heroes, the school reform crowd.

And while many of his stories are genuinely inspiring (who wouldn’t root for idealistic young teachers who knock themselves out to help poor kids succeed?), the union-bashing is jarring, especially if you happen to be reading his book, as I did, in Madison, Wisconsin.

Brill seems to have been caught flat-footed by Governor Scott Walker’s attack on public employees’ bargaining rights in Wisconsin—and by the tremendous outpouring of support for those employees, particularly teachers.

In his final chapter, he makes a hasty effort to distance the school reform he advocates from Walker’s “frontal attacks” on teachers’ unions.

But that is only after 392 pages of assaults on teachers’ unions.

Brill repeats the mantras of school reformers that class size doesn’t matter, that funding is not the issue, poverty is not the issue. The only thing that matters is a motivated, inspiring teacher. Off the squash courts, to the barricades!

If you can get past the elite love-fest, not to mention the discordant ring of Brill’s title (More bad timing: “class warfare” is now official Republican shorthand for the way the help want to tax their wealthy employers. The nerve!) you might enjoy Brill’s heroic narratives of determined, idealistic classroom teachers. But as I was reading, I kept thinking, why do we need all these heroics? Why can’t the richest country in the world provide a



JOY KOLITSKY

decent, workaday school system for everyone?

By the end of the book, Brill more or less comes around to this view himself, after watching one of his “best and brightest” push herself to the verge of a nervous breakdown at a hyper-demanding, nonunion charter school in Harlem. The teacher, Jessica Reid, burns out and quits.

“The lesson,” Brill writes, “is that unions . . . have to be enlisted in that fight because unions are the organizational link to enable school improvement to expand beyond the ability of the extraordinary people to work extraordinary hours.”

Gee, as we like to say in Wisconsin, ya think?

Brill doesn't stop there. He goes on to suggest that the nemesis of school reform for his entire book up until the last chapter, American Federation of Teachers president Randi Weingarten, should become the next Joel Klein.

I can't help but think that this sudden burst of outside-the-box thinking was spurred, in part, by the cultural shift brought on by the battle in Wisconsin.

While our kids and teachers and students and neighbors and firefighters and cops and community members from all over the state were marching to defend unions, decent pay and benefits, as well as the whole notion of the middle class, public education, and democracy itself, the pundits were slowly catching up with the idea that opinion-shapers in elite circles on the East Coast might be a bit behind the curve.

*The Daily Show* had a running gag about public school teachers as fat cats—heaping on the rhetoric about greedy teachers as it showed friendly young women with compact cars and small apartments.

Suddenly teacher-bashing (on full display in Brill's book) didn't look so cool. (Hedge fund manager David Einhorn says he “never forgot” the sixth grade math teacher at his suburban Milwaukee school who didn't

teach him anything. Really? Call me Pollyanna, but the teachers I'll never forget are the ones who taught me the most.)

At the end of the book, Jessica Reid goes to work at a regular public school and finds balance and happiness with the help of her union.

Brill, meanwhile, after promoting school choice, charters, an end to strong unions and the “civil service mentality,” while sneering at compromise and collective effort, has a conversion experience. Helping all fifty million American public school children “cannot be done charter by charter. It takes the infrastructure of the public school system,” he writes.

Oops.

Unfortunately, that infrastructure is being seriously undermined by the very forces Brill promotes.

For anyone who cares about education policy, Brill's book is crucial reading if only because it explains why the two parties have moved closer and closer together. He traces the birth of Democrats for Education Reform, a group which he says is dedicated to “making it safe . . . for Democrats to support education reform” (mainly with contributions to offset losing union support). The group preferred McCain's education policies, but supported Obama because he had a better chance of getting an anti-union agenda through.

Brill shows how a handful of foundations, including Broad, Gates, and Walton, inject big money into states that are willing to undo union contracts and break up public school systems.

In Florida, he writes, former governor Jeb Bush has “succeeded by any measure.”

Jeb Bush? Brill, the veteran investigative reporter, has apparently not read the *Miami New Times* exposé of the harrowing conditions for special ed students housed in classrooms at strip malls with no books, no lesson plans, and bored, unqualified teachers.

Like business groups in Florida that gave the state an A, Brill extols

right-to-work states that make school reform easy, while ignoring the fact that states like Wisconsin, which he scolds for labor laws that made it hard to do reform here, score better on college entrance exams.

In one short, brutal chapter, he sinks his hatchet into Diane Ravitch, the education historian who once promoted and helped administer George W. Bush's No Child Left Behind policy, but came to see the whole market-based approach as destroying public schools. Calling Ravitch “disappointing” and incapable of “articulate argument,” Brill goes in for the kill by nailing her for accepting speaking fees from teachers' unions. It's OK with Brill, though, that, after Michelle Rhee left her post as the superintendent of Washington, D.C., she began making money through a 501 (c) (4) funded by anonymous hedge fund donors.

Part of what's so maddening about the school reform movement (which now rivals Wisconsin's largest business group for campaign donations in the state) is how shoddy the thinking is behind this radical move to undo a basic bulwark of our democracy.

Brill is convinced that tying teacher evaluations to test scores is good because the same teachers tend to produce higher scores year after year. The lesson, he says, is that good teachers are all that matter. But he leaves aside other data, including the finding that the single most reliable indicator of school success is a student's zip code. The charter schools that succeed, like the Harlem Children's Zone, meanwhile, offer all kinds of wraparound services to help parents and kids climb out of seriously challenging circumstances.

That is what makes Brill's adoration of the Ivy League “best and brightest” so distasteful. There really are distinct social classes in this country, and the war between them, at present, is being won by the people who already have it made. Destroying unions and dismantling public schools will only accelerate the process. ♦

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# Perry Tales



It's bedtime, children, also put on your jammies, scootch under the covers, and I'll tell you another story about the Texas governor.

He is flitting hither, thither, and yon—spreading little Perry tales about his record so that he can get to the White House. It's a bit of a strange quest, because he calls the capitol city “a seedy place,” and he tells the commoners that he hates—nay, deeply loathes!—the very government that he wants to head. With his tea party hat carefully positioned atop his bounteous crop of hair, Prince Rick warns the commoners that big government is bad, bad, bad—because it intrudes into their lives, forcing things like Social Security and Medicare on them.

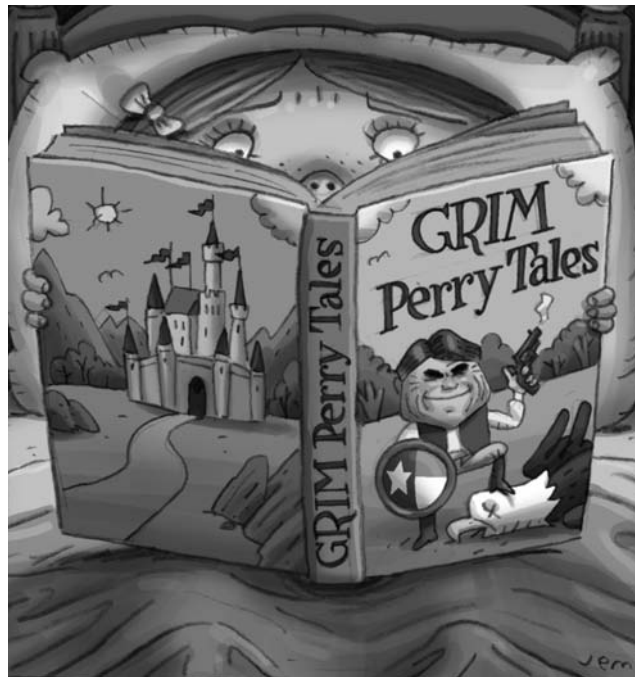
This prancer would not be where he is, though, without the steady “intrusion” of big government into his life. From first grade through college, his education was paid for by local, state, and federal taxpayers. He was even a cheerleader for the government-run college he attended. And, as cotton farmers, he and his family were supported with tens of thousands of dollars in crop subsidies from the pockets of national taxpayers—a big government “intrusion” into his pocketbook.

Then, after a brief stint in the federal government's Air Force, the per-

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*Jim Hightower produces The Hightower Lowdown newsletter and is the author, with Susan DeMarco, of “Swim Against the Current: Even a Dead Fish Can Go with the Flow.”*

fidious prince hit the mother load of government largesse: political office. He's been hunkered down there for twenty-seven years and counting. In addition to drawing more than a quarter-century's worth of monthly paychecks from Texas taxpayers, including \$150,000 a year as governor, Perry also receives full health coverage and a generous pension from the state. Wait, there's more: He gets \$10,000 a month to cover the rent on a luxury suburban home, a



JEM SULLIVAN

flock of personal aides, and even a state-paid subscription to *Food & Wine* magazine.

So, children, ignore Perry's talk—and look at what he actually does. When he says he intends to make government “as inconsequential as possible,” he means in your life, not his.

Now, Perry is sprinkling fresh fairy dust across the land in an effort to soften his earlier screed against America's Social Security program. During the past couple of years, in

the heat of his lusty romance of the rowdy tea party crowd, Perry wooed and wowed those who hate government by offering passionate denunciations of Social Security as a “Ponzi scheme,” a “monstrous lie,” and a “failure.” The national retirement program, he thundered, violates the Constitution's “principles of federalism and limited government.” His unequivocal message was: Kill it!

But—oops—now in hot pursuit of the GOP presidential nomination, he's learned that even most Republicans wince at his macho wackiness. A CNN poll in August finds that 57 percent of Republicans want no major changes in Social Security. Why? Because, despite the Ponzi-scheme Perry Tale, it works.

So, the red-meat tea partier who had savaged the program has suddenly turned into a senior-hugger, offering a revised, gentler Perry Tale. In this one, he never, ever meant to abolish Social Security. Nay, Perry now says with a pixie twinkle, he only wants to stimulate “a legitimate conversation in this country about how to fix that program.”

If you're not sure what “fix” means, ask your dog.

Perry might heed the blunt words of another Republican, who was twice elected to the White House, Dwight Eisenhower: “Should any political party attempt to abolish Social Security . . . you would not hear of that party again in our political history. There is a tiny splinter group, of course, that believes you can. . . . Their number is negligible, and they are stupid.”

Until our next Perry Tale, good-night children, and sweet dreams. ♦

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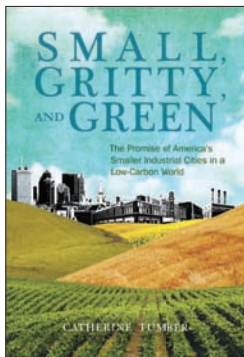
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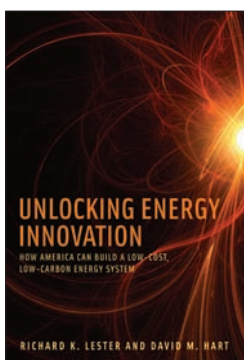
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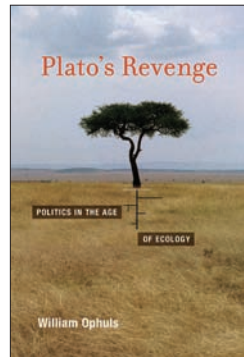


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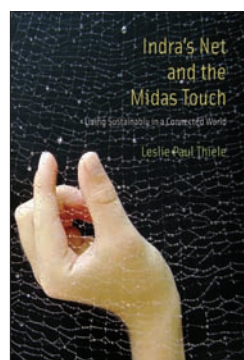
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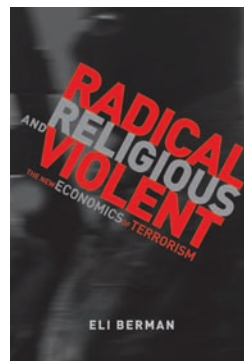


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