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September 1989 - Volume 14 Number 7

"All people talk about
Is the burning of Sal's
Pizza. They're more
concerned that white
people's property got
destroyed. Fuck Sal's
Pizza. We have to
protect Hack life."

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to end the peace

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Women in the News
As a television producer and on-camera taI-

ent who has worked at a network station, I was astounded to read your interview With the nervy women of TV ("Women on the Verge of a Nervy Breakthrough" June 1989). I couldn't believe you got your interviewees to reveal such scathing things in print. Even when we talked like that in the ladies' room, we were always checking the air-conditioning ducts to see if we were being bugged. Great piece of work!

ICANNA WOLFER

New York, New York

Boom or Bust?

As an organizer with a progressive senior organization, I am appalled at the divisive rhetoric exhibited by Katy Butler in "The Great Boomer Bust" (June 1989). Her portrayal of the elderly as a group who take from children is an attack worthy of the most conservative journalists.

Seniors vote at a rate of 68 percent, more than any other adult bloc of the population. They understand their obligation to give back to this country what it has given, and I have witnessed them doing exactly that. The seniors I work with have fought for a basic health plan to ensure that the working poor have medical coverage. They have fought the major developers of our downtown area in an effort to preserve shelters for the homeless and affordable low-income housing. They have worked successfully to raise the minimum wage.

I plead with you to stop fueling dissension. We need a change of administrations for the better. We are willing to do our part; how about you?

DAVID D. PORDON

Staff Director

Washington State Council of Senior Citizens
Seattle Washington

Katy Butler's article on downwardly mobile, debt-ridden, struggling-to-survive baby boomers was the most depressing thing I've read since my bank statement. It was also incredibly reassuring because it proved that we are not alone in this situation.

It was also depressing because it is the next-to-last Mother Jones before my subscription expires. Unfortunately, I cannot afford to renew.

AARON IVIERIVIEISTEIN

St. Louis Missouri

I have always secretly felt inadequate because I could not live up to my parents' economic standards. Like Butler, I had assumed that the comforts which I took for granted as a child were the norm; to suddenly face the fact that they aren't about to be there for me is a shock. I'm grateful for this revelation of our common vulnerability.

ALAN YOUNG

San Francisco, California

Whine, whine, whine. As a bona fide baby boomer, I found Katy Butler's essay superficial and self-indulgent and way off-base. Anyone who can mention gentrification, tofu, and Haagen-Dazs in nearly the same breath without the proverbial tongue-in-cheek misses the pathetic point of many boomers who displace the poor and turn

them into homeless in their nostalgic nausea
for a piece of the rock.

ALAN GRAHAM

Pensacola, Florida

Racial Whiteness

I am an African American architect. Except
for summers in Vermont and Rhode Island,
short forays through the American South in
the fifties, sixties, and seventies, and a
twelve-month sojourn in west Africa, I have
spent all of my fifty years in cities.
Several months ago, I came across Wen-
dell Berry's book of essays, Standing by
Words. After reading these essays about
writing and farming, I thought to myself, I
wish this guy would write about the Ameri-
can racial experience. The essays are the
most sensible things I have read since James
Baldwin writing in the early 1960s.

I was especially pleased to read Wendell
Berry's "Latest Thinking" in your June 1989
issue, ending what has seemed to me a twenty-
year silence by advocates of the earth and
the environment on the topic of racism in
America.

While I agree with Berry's main point, I
think his conclusions about black social mobility
are off-base. I believe it is inappropriate,
however well intentioned, to direct con-
demnation toward the tiny number of
blacks who manage to graduate from four-
year institutions of higher education, even
from schools of business. "What sign,"
writes Berry, "will they wear besides their
expensive suits by which the police can tell
them from their unemployed and unem-
ployable brothers and sisters of the inner
city? This comment, almost a veiled threat,
is perilously close to old, and by now dis-
credited attitudes toward uppity niggers?
In The Hidden Wound, Berry speaks elo-
quently of the personal transformation that
is possible when a person of privilege is
forced to do, learns to delight in doing, what
Berry calls "nigger work." This is an appro-
priate discovery for Berry, the great-grand-

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son of a slave owner. Does he deny that a
simiilar transformation is possible when the
son of :1 sharecropper is relieved from what
Marx called the idiocy of rural life, learns to
think ahsttactly, to face the prospect of
ownership of property or land which has
been withheld from his ancestors for genera-
tions?

Berryis main point, however, is well
taken. The racial problem is intertwined
with our careless national attitude toward
the land, toward useful and necessary work,
and toward local landscapes. Berry, as much
as anyone writing, is helping us understand
the connections between people-and with
our environment. By suggesting that an an-
swer to racial problems is a restoration of
our whole communities-our human neigh-
bors, water, earth, air, the plants and ani-
mals with whom our local life is shared-he
Challenges us to revise our standards of ra-
cial and ecological progress. Not a minute
too soon.

(EARL ANTHONY

Berkeley, California

A Clarification

The article uThe Anti-Shrinksii Uuly/August

I89) mistakenly says that 80m television and elsewhere, Bi'eggin has advised mental patients to stop taking their medication? I never give such blanket suggestions. Anyone attempting to come off psychiatric medications should generally do so with experienced guidance from someone familiar with withdrawal syndromes. In addition, the persons emotional problems must be taken into consideration. On the other hand, as We written in my book, Psychiatric Drugs.- Hazards to the Brain, many of these drugs involve dangers that patients too often are not informed about.

Two other points: I am not a llradical therapist? My private practice is neither political nor radical. Nor am I Hmti-shrink." I believe that psychiatry should stay in its rightful place, as a specialty of medicine with no special political or legal powers.

PETER BREGGIN, MI).

Director, Center for the Study of Psychiatry
Bethesdm Maryland

Correction: Due to an editing error, a mistake was made on the byline of "Will the Circle Be Unbroken? (june '89). It should have read, 8lw Constance Matthiessen and David Weir?

Write your Mother. Send your reunions and suggestions to Backta/k, Motherjortex 16(73 Mission Street, San Frantisw, (IA 94103. Please be sure to include your name. address. and daytime telephone number. We reserve tbc right to edit letters. :1

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Robbing the Future

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took to the streets not long ago,
and their hasie demand, vaguely
defined though passionately ex-
pressed was democracy. Around the globe, demoe-
raey is in vogue, inspiring some Americans to thump
their chests about the collapse of communism and
the spread otozrr values. But ityou listen closely, its a
pretty hollow chest welre thumping; our democracy
is not quiekening many pulses these days.

Had they been able to talk directly with the stu-
dents in Tiananmen Square before the 27th Army
smashed the illusion that the Peoples Liberation
Army was anything other than the Gerontoeraey
Preservation Force, manv Americans might have
fleshed out a fuller Vision of democracy. Democracy
MOVEMENTS

By Roger Wilkins

amounts to a good deal more than the absence of an
all-powerful party whose functionaries think they
know the whole truth and force everybody to live up
to it. It means more than a greater opportunity to
hoogie at discos, more than an absence of corrup-
tion, more than individual license.

In such an encounter, we might have admitted that
a democracy based on such phrases as llWe the peo-
ple" should mean more than rabid anticommunism,
fireworks and speeches on the Fourth of July, and
free markets operating llefficiently? It presupposes a
people who have a sustained and active interest in
their country and their community; who have the
capacity to recognize their nations problems and the
will to act; and who seek out leaders embodying
those qualities. In short, a democracy requires a
robust and ongoing conversation between leaders
who grapple with the nationk thorniest problems
and an alert populace that seeks out the best interests
of the nation.

Thats how we might describe our understanding
of democracy to Chinals next generation. But what
would we slmw them? As the struggle for democracy
sweeps the world it seems to me that at home our
own democratic politics is failing us. Or, to say it
another way, our politics has delivered to us a
president exactly

suited to what our Newdemunds
politics has become.

We have a reflector. for democracy
not a leader-a fact
now so Obvious that
its already a cliché.

So the headlines
about democratic
yearnings elsewhere
should provoke some
somber reflection
on our part. rather
than mindless self-
adulation.

()ne place to start this reflection on our own un-
derlying problems is with a recent finding by the
joint Committee on the Economic Report of the
President .1 select group of Republicans and Demo-
erats from both the House and the Senate. After
studying our economic situation. the committee con-
cluded that "the nation simply consumes so much of
its output that there is not enough left oven or saved,
to meet its investment needsfl

This is not news. Everybody has known about the

hndget detieit for years. We knew about it during the recent presidential campaign, in which both candidates resolutely ducked any hard or realistic discussion of the problem. Instead, we the people were in such an irresolute state that George Bush's inane cry "No new taxes" became a potent political instrument. We elected the man who, with this vow, sapped the government of its ability to unleash creative energy in order for the voters to continue to indulge themselves at the expense of their children both living and unborn. But what are the real, day-to-day effects of this decision?

lead me to a
paraphrase of
Pogo: "We have
met the leader
and he is us."

Illustration by Mark Matt/Jo

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uEducation is perhaps the most promi-
nent area where our nations shortcomings
threaten to impose enormous long-term
costs? the committee reports. llThe United
States spends more per student than other
industrialized nations, but is still falling be-
hind the rest of the industrialized world in
promoting literacy, job skills, and educa-
tional achievement at every level. . . . Ap-
proximately 13 percent of seventeen-year-
old Americans cannot read, write, or count.
It is estimated that an additional 17 to 21
million adults cannot read, and millions of
others have skills so rudimentary that their
productivity in the workplace is limited?
The committee noted that the unpaid bills
we are piling up now will come due for pay-
ment by the children we are now under-
educating, who will thus be ill-prepared for
the challenge, and by successive generations.
A people that sees no harm in spending its
common inheritance-our resources-as
fast as it can, but acquiesces in the squander-
ing of its national future, can hardly be said
to be exercising sovereignty on behalf of llwe
the peoplefl except as that phrase is nar-
rowly defined to include only those both liv-
ing and privileged. Because we Americans
are lucky, living on a thinly populated and
extraordinarily bountiful land, over the past
two centuries we have gotten into the habit of
letting the future take care of itself. We out-
did ourselves in that regard during the
1980s.

Then, into the breach George Bush was
thrust, the quintessential modern politician.
At a time when the people need to be re-
minded of the magnitude of their problems
and their role in solving them, we chose a
man who seems to have a vision no larger
than the desire to hold office. In this era of
political handlers, sophisticated polling
techniques, and focus groups convened to
inform the candidate of what he must feed
back to the public, it is hard to expect more.
judging from his record so far, we might
conclude that Bush prefers puppies to chil-
dren, but then, to paraphrase Pogo: uWe

have met the leader and he is us."

Maybe the most urgent remedial educational task before us has less to do with teaching youngsters how to read, write, and count than it does teaching them something of the obligations, tasks, mental effort, and sustained hard work required of people who aspire to be both sovereign and free.

But right now, we don't really have much to say to the Chinese students and intellectuals who may be in hiding and planning for better days ahead. Perhaps all we can tell them is this: We can supply you with grand phrases about people's democracy and concrete designs for more shopping malls. It's up to you to fill in the blanks.

What should a
world leader do
when his fiercest
opponent decides
to surrender?
'I'm not to cry.

Illustration by Victor/ulmsz

BAD ATTITUDE

By Barbara Ehrenreich

ever I saw one!). Then they threw out their uranium
supplies and cut off military aid to Nicaragua, and now
they want to talk about chucking their short-range mis-
siles. So I got Dick Cheney on the phone. I said,
do you realize they're pulling down the barbed wire on
the Austro-Hungarian border and talking about turning
Checkpoint Charlie into a duty-free boutique? I mean,
when are we going to retaliate?

There was a silence as of a man in pain. I said, he
finally said at last, I know how you feel. But we don't
fight dirty. We're against germ warfare. We take a dim
view of genocide. And our stand on public cannibalism
is well known. But here was one thing we never thought
they'd stoop to . . . one thing so cunning and evil we
thought even a commie would touch it . . .

You mean public relations, Dick?

And not only that? he said, his voice dropping to a
hoarse whisper. Charisma, Barb, leadership, intel-
ligence . . . possibly brilliance-the whole shooting
match?

I replaced the receiver soundlessly, his dry sobs still
echoing in my ear. If it came to war-heads, we could beat
them anytime. But with IQ points, well, we were clearly
outnumbered. And then there was the charisma gap:

they hadn't wasted any time moving in on that . . . but
no time to brood! Like all the other really important

O! I CAN'T TAKE IT ANYMORE. THE SHAME!

The humiliation! First they took their inter-
mediate-range missiles out of Europe. Then
they pulled out of Afghanistan (a cute trick if
national columnists, I'd gotten an invitation to dinner at
the Bushes. I had just enough time to slip into a nice
little outfit from L. 1.. Bean, grab a pocketful of doggie
treats, and rush over to the White House.

George and Barbara met us-can you believe it-in
their own bedroom. They were so down-to-earth,
standing around and bantering about who left the cap
off the toothpaste, and then pretty soon they were wres-
tling, just in a friendly way of course, and squirting each
other with the Crest and generally whooping it up.

Everyone was getting into the spirit of it. Some young
fellow named Newt was going through the presidents
underwear drawer, pocketing loose change and
cufflinks. Dan was rolling on the floor with the puppies,
and Marilyn was striding around with a tape measure,
muttering about natural disasters, assassinations, and
the like.

But just then the phone rang, and John Sununu lis-
tened gravely for a few minutes before reporting: I told
Mikhail, sir. Says he's planning to issue the entire Red
Army Frisbees and love beads. But I told him you were
in the bathroom, sir? So we all filed down to dinner,
trying not to let our horror and outrage show, and pret-
ty soon I was chatting away with Dan about all the
preparation he'll be doing for his next diplomatic
venture-actually learning a language, he told me,
probably Swiss.

I was just rehandling my plate with popcorn when the

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phone rang again. 11Mikhail again11 jim
Baker announced grimly. 11He wants to
know who he should talk to about making
Moscow and Washington into_howld he
put it?-1sister citiesK 11 There were shrieks
of righteous anger: 11Commie bastards111
uRed devils P1 11Drugstore cowboys111 and so
forth. But the president, I am proud to re-
port, never lost his grip. Weld go right on
with the dinner, he told us calmly, only des-
sert would be served down in the Situation
Room. just in case.

So we all crowded in there with our blue-
berry cobblers, Dan and the puppies in-
cluded, and settled down to business. 11Do
we press the button now? squealed Mar-
ilyn, excited to be present at the genesis of a
world-class disaster unrelated to herself by
blood or marriage. 11Wait a minutell
shouted Roger Ailes. mThis is a job for . . fl
There was a pause as everyone turned to
look at the odd-looking fellow in the corner,
dressed as one of the Blues Brothers, and
bopping, as it were, to a distant drummer.
thank God you're here, Lee? said the
president. thhatlve we got on this, uh, Gen-
eral Secretary guy? Any, like, trouble with
the woman thing? Failure to pay income
tax? Acts of mercy toward known felons,
rapists, or members of minority groupsV
But Lee just went on snapping his fingers
and engaging in rhythmic chin-thrusting
motions. 11Well then, what about this world-
domination thing? Wasnlt it Leninls last
wish to be buried in Epcot Center? I mean,
isnlt that the whole point.Du

A light came into Leels eyes. 0Y0, Prez
he started to say, but it was the phone again.
Marlin Fitzwater picked it up this time, lis-
tened in silence for a moment, and then sank
back down into a chair, his face ashen. 11ltls
Mikhail, sir. I donlt know how to tell you
this, sir. Hels offering unconditional sut-
render, sir. Says they're no longer interested
in the concept of the nation-state. Says it was
a dumb idea in the first place and should
have been abandoned in the nineteenth cen-
tury. Invites you to send over a proven ad-
ministrator if you like, someone of the cal-
iber of Clint Eastwood. If he could be
spared, that is . . .5

11Thatls itjl said the president, sagging.
11ltls all over. The end? Dick and Lee and
Rog and Newt were all crying softly into
their cobblers. Marilyn was frowning. The
puppies were howling. From the back of the
room I heard a commotion and Danls voice
crying, too: clt is not bedtime. It is not111
Then Barbara got up-God, how I love
that womanls style-anc1 walked over to
George, just as calm as could be, and began
stroking his head, cooing ever so softly: 11ltls
not the end, Georgie, not yet. Donlt forget-
you've still got Noriega?

Peace ls Uur

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MOTHER JONES I I

Whui students
did on their
summer vacation:
plan a hot full.
' ppm sow-
Aimcn

Back to School

AST YI-LAR AN ".XPATIH TIN (;I-NI Rx l ION
of US. college studcms took ()Vcr more than thf a
dozen campus administration huihhngs mtlmm'idc.
After :l summer of planning; smdcm lczldcrx predict
this year could he cvcn hottcr. Al lktmitk Wayne
State Univeristy, after A xcrics of mcixt inudcms drcw
llttlc official mnccm, wmc two hnndrcd xtudums
mowd mm the administration hmhhng Mr J Iwchc-
day .hstudyiin." Thh ymr "wchrc going U)
have to keep On the UIHVCI'QI'VK luck? xlyx
student organizer Leigh Smith. At Stanford,
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will take 148 yc.lrstocat(h up. . . . 11K kind of too
little too latc.v At H()ward;1 StlldL'Ht mkcmcr man-
aged togal4ccAtwnuroffthuhoard ()f'trustccsfl'hix
,mw

mnhwmgm'fgww

Stanford's Cheryl Taylor, Gino
Hernandez, and Richard Suh
helped lead a multiothni: stu-
den! takeover of the presidenfs
offices. Says Suh, a iunior: "The
student movement's gaining
strength. . . . People are feeling
very empowered."

ymr the Hth pomt muld hr the chooxing of a new
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m who hmught nn :anrcr. "l dmft think they
xx ould dare du Am'thmg (hm h nuld Amuse us again,"
mlys xmdcm xpokcxxxnmm .Xprll Sih'cr. "But we
dunk know. m xwhrc prcparmg ourschn; wchrc on
the lookout for who thcx W'c hrngmg ln."

Whun me York mum Ed Koch mm 31 student Sit
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xmmiun tz'_ldllion.1lh uhlcatcd white And Europmn
smdcnh. union mu m'cf xlys studcm spokcxmdn
Kcrm Roll). hNtm thm (UNY ls wrung people of
(Jrihhum and Mrmn dmcnu theyhrc cutting funds
.Hld lnnung munnf' 50 Kelly And chow students
wrng/cd J lew-da) cm widc student strike. forc-
in); (nncmor Xhmo Ummm to x cm the planned tui.
mm Immlw .md thc mm lcglshsturc to restore fund-
ing; to (IUXY. Other mmpuscs to watch: Ethnic
.m .11'cm-xx mmmx .l Mg muc at UC Santa Barbara,
wherc xmdcms wcm 011 a hnngcr strike to protest
Aligned instimtloml Iamsm and won An ethnic studios
mursc r'cqulrcmcm. U(i Bcrkclcyk gmduatc students
cxpm to lmd olhcr campuses in a strike for health
hcncms. And smdcntx .n the University of Massachu-
setts at Amherst plan to continue taking m'cr science
hulldings Jud 1&le 10 prmcst mihmry-funded research.
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 " ' ' v - ,
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 "For 22 years we've been Save HThe cost is so little. The need is distributed in this way
 . instead, com-
 the Children sponsors. We began by so great. Won't you join us as Save the bined with oth
 er sponsors, they are
 sponsoring a desperately poor little girl Children sponsors?" ' used to help children in
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 with projects and
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 u , that direct handouts are the least efteC- tion, food production, and nutrition 80
 tunethiYietl: Se?)eh%stgagr:oovt/Jtr?aggfieowas tive way of helping children, your hardwo
 rking people can help them-
 sponsorship contributions are not selves and save their own children.
 blossoming because someone cared
 other children in the same way. And
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 Chlld. I
 the world. Children we have come to I I
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 i. r . I sponsor a CI boy girl C! elther in the area I've checked below. I
 If you ve ever wondered What
 can one person do?'-the answer is I El Where the need i3 Dominican El Indonesia Deudan '
 You can help save a child.' If you are I Is greatest Republic El Mali DTuniSia I
 touched by the plight Of needy children I C! Bangladesh El El Salvador D Nepal El Zimbabw
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 th , bett r 8 than Save the i I UBolivia EIThe Gambia DPhilippines I
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 the prog ress Of the Child you sponsor. I : Instead of becoming a sponsor at this time. I
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 ing whatyourloveand supportcan do. L - ----- .l

I? was a long hot season
for publicly supported
art: 0 Richard Serra
sculpture removed from
the Federal Plaza in
Manhattan, a collection
of "blasphemous"
photos denounced on
the Sande floor. Two
of the Mapplethorpe
photos you couldn't
see at the Corcoran:
Thomas (1986), Ieh, and
Self Portrait (1980).
Jesse Helms,
Art Critic

NO 'I' HER VOLLEY IN WHAT f-UNI) AMI&NTALISTS (:ALI. AN
American "kultuml revolution in the nineties" was fired in
junc, when the (jorcomn (inilcry in Washington, D.C.,
cancelled an exhibition by photographer Robert Mapplethorpe.
Mapplethorpe, who died of AIDS in March at forty-two, is widely
known for his stark, elegant, often homophobic images. (lorcoran
directors admitted they worried that congressional committees
would cite the show as one more reason to attack the budget for
the National Endowment for the Arts. But an ad hoc group of
artists, critics, and art institutions hit back: gallery owner Bill
Woody organized a slide show of ten of the contested photos,
which were projected "from ground to roof" on the wall of the
(lorcomn; and the Washington Project for the Arts, which also
receives NEA funds, offered an alternative exhibition space
through mid-August. Meanwhile, Senator Jesse Helms; threatened
to continue efforts to cut public funds for homophobic art.
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I4 xi-.P'ia.xisi-,R 1989

JACKSONQBROWNE'S' x 56,.
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anything Can Happen, "_ .
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"Chasing You Into The Light" ' .
' " ' and h , I . ,
thAm A Patriot" , ..
JACKSON BROWONE .WORLD IN MOTION
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native record stores often don't
stock it. Most fans go right to
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World Music

HF. DOCTOR is included in the IN. title."
Eugene Chndhoumc, virtuoso guitarist, come-
dian and social critic, has emerged from the
musical underground to appear before growing
crowds at US colleges, European jazz
festivals, and Eastern bloc youth cen-
ters. He describes his music as free-
improvised heavy metal country and
western hip-hop. Often all those styles
are fused into a single song such as his
versions of country classics in which
lap steel lines are transformed into
flights of twisted bebop fancy, as the mad doctor
scrapes his fingernails, cheap transistor radios, and
balloons against the strings. When later with the
guitar he pulls out the electric guitar, the electric
bird cage, or the bowed plunger, or. . .

I6 SI-ZP'II MBLR 1989

Favorite music?

"I think it's
important to make
fun of all types."

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for the right
to fight one
of these

"quadrals."

There's no type of music, dmthke." says Chad-
houmc, a product of New York's "down town" ex-
perimental music scene. "I think it's important to
make a lot of types." Searing social criticism cuts
through his performances. His original protest
songs include Jesus PMTCTs MexictV

'1111d'11x'1x'1x'rc111111t" .111dthe punk

11H0w (1111 You Kill Me. 11m Already

DC'JLif Despite his knife-edged attacks

on rednecks and Republicans, Chad-

11011rne, perhaps due to his goodwilled

humor, has endured only a few threats

11111 thrown hatters during extensive

tours of the southern 11111' circuit. He's recorded with

bluegrass luminaries the Red Clay Ramblers, rock-

ers Camper Van Beethoven, and members of the Vio-

lent Femmes. A forthcoming album: (Iotmrv Music

from fl)? World (1)flsltii, 1. e801) Ostcrtag

Post-

Wrestling

Society

MhRICA NEEDS NEW

heroes. Surveys show

it. Which is why

Samuel Goldwyn Company

is distributing American

Gladiators this fall to TV sta-

tions WNBC-New York,

KHj-Los Angeles, and others

around the country. 11We

wanted to harken back to the

days of raw courage," says a

Goldwyn spokesperson, of

tough people that could sur-

vive anything.

Here, as they say, is the
11C0ncept." Every week, the
regular gladiators-Zap,
Lace, Willie, Cattalus, Domi-
nos, and Evander_square
off against the challengers
chosen from the masses.
Challengers must make it
through regional elimina-
tions and then Gladiator
Camp. 1N0 ones ruled outf
says Goldwyn1s spokes-
person. it1f a forty-year-old
man or woman
out there whols
in great shape
can cut this
thing, why not?
Americans al-
ways feel we can
win at any-
thing." Winning
in this case
might mean using padded
"pugel sticks11 to spar on a
bridge with Zap. The pro-
ducers also have created new
kinds of violence named
11p0werball11' and uswing
shot."
"The immense success of
wrestling kind of changed the
thinking in terms of what
viewers are interested in,
what their values are," ex-
plains the spokesperson. 11We
took that one step further.
We want a real show, not
something campy. When
youite exposed to millions of
people, then you have the
ability to be a hero?
- Yvonne Sabibsted
lemgmp/J by Ridmrd Cordon (C/mdboume)

I. F. Stone

1907-1989

he first time I laid eyes on I. F. Stone was six years ago at the Institute for Policy Studies in Washington, DC, where I worked at the time. I remember that a dozen people were milling around, but Izzy's attention was focused like a laser beam on a newspaper held barely an inch from his face. He moved the paper rapidly from side to side, tenaciously devouring line after line of print. When he reached the end of the story, he lowered the paper and scanned the room, eager to share his findings with anyone ready to listen. Izzy's great skill was to bore in on the lazy assumptions, subtle inconsistencies, and outright stupidities of public officials that others might miss. "Every government is run by liars," he once said. "That's a prima facie assumption unless proven to the contrary. . . . But a government always reveals a good deal, if you take the trouble to really study what it says?"

I used a book I was writing about President Reagan and the press as an excuse to get to know Izzy. I became his student and, later, his friend as well. In the course of phone chats and afternoon teas, he talked about how the conventions of the Washington press corps, its proximity to power, its glorification of official sources, its presumption of objectivity, left it vulnerable to manipulation by any president. "Objectivity is fine if it's real," Izzy told me. "Every society has its dogmas, and a genuinely objective approach can break through them. But most of the time objectivity is just the rationale for regurgitating the conventional wisdom of the day."

Izzy and his wife, Esther, met on a blind date, and through nearly sixty years of marriage they behaved like young lovers. I remember bumping into them at a Christmas party and watching as they danced with delight, Izzy grinning, "We love rock and roll!"

In the ways of power and the press, what better tutor than Izzy Stone?

Photograph by Mary Ellen Marla

"We saw the first copy of our book today," Esther bubbled as the party drew to a close. She was referring to Izzy's *Trial of Socrates*, which Little, Brown & Co. would publish the following month. Her use of the pronoun "our" was un-self-conscious but apt; though Esther seldom received proper credit, she was an indispensable partner. For nineteen years, from 1953 through 1971, when I. F. Stone's *Weekly* set the standard for tough reportage about politics, Izzy was the researcher, reporter, and editor, but Esther managed the business end of their operation, no small task.

I last saw Izzy on Easter Sunday, three months before his death of heart failure, at eighty-one, on June 18. He was in high spirits: *The Trial of Socrates* had become a national best-seller, six volumes of his Washington reporting were being republished by Little, Brown, and he was busily plotting half a dozen new projects. Best of all, eye surgery had returned to him one of his greatest

pleasures, the ability to read. No longer did he have to
grasp my elbow as we walked along Connecticut Ave-
nue. He told me on that walk that he had tlfive or six
good years left as a writer" now that he could read
regular-sized type again.
Illtis wonderful l'l Izzy exclaimed. "I feel like a boy in a
candy store with a pocketful of money to spendfl
#Mar/e Hertsgaard
"Obiedlvity is
fine it it's real. But
most at the time
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MOTHER jONES I7

CONFESSIONS

T WAS A RAUCOUS MEETING AT THE SERENITY

Club in the old section of Clearwater, Florida, a mile or so from the Gulf of Mexico. Under the ceiling fans, a woman named Joanie in a red polka-dot dress was telling her story. llThen I spent three days on that boat, drinking with the governor of Texas? she said. She paused to let that sink in. ill donlt think he was really the governor of Texas? The crowded room exploded with laughter, and against the wall of the converted church a short, brawny man with a thick brown mustache grinned a little self-consciously, showing white, even teeth.

Like many of the other recovering alcoholics at this meeting last spring, Tom was drinking . Cokes and smoking cigarettes. Like so many of the others, he was diffident, not quite ready for life outside this encircling support group in which people were known only by first names. This cowed, boyish quality wasnlt quite at home in his manly shell: strong forearms, a wide jaw, and big Indian-looking Cheekbones reddened by the sun.

Despite the virile aura and a lucky name, Tom F. Sawyer could still become the ultimate loser. On Halloween week-end nearly three years ago, his next-door neighbor, a twenty-five-year-old woman, was murdered, and when the Clearwater police noticed Sawyerls nervous manner and muscular arms they decided he had strangled her. One afternoon they brought him into the white, sunstruck police station a few blocks up the tracks from the Serenity Club, and early the next morning, after a long night of questioning, a police spokesman had good news for a press anxious for word on this sensational case.

Sawyerls parents learned of the arrest by picking up the Clearwater Sun the next morning. Tom Sawyer, a five-dollar-an-hour golf-course grounds keeper, had lladmitted everythingll in the killing and rape of Janet L. Staschak, lla Christian girlf the paper captioned her smiling picture on the front page. On the same page was a photo of Tom Sawyer the police had provided from 2 year-old drunk-driving arrest, showing a bloated, unkempt face, hard-boiled eyes. tiI-le looked like a murderer in that picture? admits his father, Farwell Sawyer.

It was, by all appearances, an open-and-shut case. The state had all the evidence it neededefor what, short of torture, would ever inspire a man to confess to such a hideous crime?

The police made just By Philip WeiSS

one mistake: they turned

on a tape recorder during Sawyerls sixteen-hour interrogation. Were it not for that recording, Sawyer would have stayed a nobody, good-bye kind of guy with a strange, obsessive manner who looked like he sure might have killed somebody and had even said as much.

Why would anyone confess to a murder he didn't commit?

Meet Tom Sawyer.

Photographs by Bud Lee

Capital Crime:

Notes on the Death Penalty

OM SAWYER WAS ONE OF 16,066 PERSONS arrested for murder in 1986, and his case is one of an unknown number in which potentially fatal mistakes were made. When the US Supreme Court affirms a death sentence, its judgment rests on two underlying assumptions: that capital punishment is evenhanded with regard to class and color and that the appeal-heavy road to execution is long enough to prevent anyone from being executed in error. A look at the actual workings of the death penalty in the United States shows that these assumptions may be, like the conviction of Tom Sawyer, utterly mistaken. A reporters notebook:

Number of people executed in the United States this century: more than 7,000
Number of people sentenced to death and later proved innocent: 139
Of the 139, number who received a reprieve within 72 hours before scheduled execution: 22
Of the 139, number actually executed: 23
Number of people now on death row: 2,186
At the rate of 23 errors per 7,000 executions, number of people now on death row who are likely to be proven innocent posthumously: 7
In a 1988 study of 14 juveniles on death row, number who had serious head injuries as children: 14
Number who were physically abused: 12
Number of juveniles now on death row: 30
Number of mentally retarded persons executed since 1984: 5
Percentage of death row inmates who are black: 39.8
Percentage of U.S. population that is black: . . . 12.1
Percentage of death row inmates who are white: 51.8
Percentage of U.S. population that is white: . . . 77.5
Average cost of a case resulting in execution, counting appeals, in Florida: \$3.2 million
Estimated cost of life imprisonment for 40 years in Florida: \$516,000
Amount California taxpayers could save each year if the death penalty were abolished: \$91 million
Number of persons on death row in California: 226
Number who can afford private counsel for an
_Carolyn Callahan (9" Michael DiLeo

Today, however, Sawyer's case is far murkier. He still faces first-degree murder charges, and he could still end up on death row. But his 292-page transcript that documents police methods in a gritty film noir manner, has proved so startling that the state of Florida is in danger of losing it as evidence. Inside a six-by-nine-foot padded cell that Sawyer occupied during one sleepless night, first the police became convinced of Sawyer's guilt, then he did, too. It was a case of brainwashing, recorded as these things almost never are: "Woman, look at your eyes," said Detective Peter Fire, by now a few hours into the questioning and frustrated by the suspect's refusal to give in.

Sawyer: "What about my eyes?"

Fire: "You're about ready . . . tears, look at the tears coming out of your eyes now?"

Sawyer: "There ain't no tears coming out of my eyes?"

Fire: "No? Those ducts are full. They sure are. You ain't gonna be able to sleep. . . . You'll wind up going back drinking

again. That's what you'll do?

Sawyer: "No, I ain't never gonna do that."

Fire: "And you'll end up killing yourself. If you're lucky. But you're not gonna get out of this, because you're gonna do time. You're gonna go to jail. We will prove it. There's too much police science involved in this. You watched enough detective shows and Quincy and everything else, that you know better than that?"

Sawyer's case deserves public attention now for a couple of reasons. It stands as vivid testimony of the importance of the Supreme Court's landmark Miranda ruling, which in 1966 granted extensive rights to suspects in interrogations, but which has since been under steady attack. It also offers a David Mamet-like glimpse of the danger zone of the police confessional, the volatile dynamics of the detective-suspect relationship. Many death-penalty cases turn on the evidence that comes out of these chambers, but in nearly every case in which a defendant argues that his or her statement was coerced, no record exists to confirm the alleged manipulation and pressure.

I had a homicide detective tell me one time, "Some cops will commit a murder to solve a murder." A criminologist Warren Holmes, a longtime Miami detective, testified during a court hearing on the Sawyer confession. "And although that may be an exaggeration, they may murder a man's psyche and his soul to get a false confession out of him. A lot of cops are guilty of that."

THE FLORIDA DREAM IS ONE OF PERSONAL LIBERATION FROM the life of toil and bad weather up north, and for a period of time after World War II, the York Apartments were a glamorous place to live. Today the dream has moved ravenously onward, east toward Tampa Bay; the neighborhood around the York Apartments is now dominated by warehouses and ragged palms.

The York's low rentals (\$260 a month) cater to young, transient people, the sort who land four- or five-dollar-an-hour jobs on the Highway 19 strip. Tom Sawyer, who moved into building 8, number 2, in early 1986, and Janet Staschak, who moved into number 3 in the same building a few months later, both had jobs on the strip. Both had come to Florida from small towns in the North's Rust Belt to make a new start.

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For Staschak, whose parents had been laid off from a dye-casting factory in Pennsylvania, Florida had looked like a land of opportunity. But in Clearwater, she and her husband split up, and she worked as a cake decorator at the big Kash ni Karry in the nearby mall.

Sawyer worked a few miles south of the Kash na Karry at the Cove Cay golf course. He had moved south from a small town in Illinois after his engagement went bust. His hancee had begun seeing another man, but all their trouble stemmed from Sawyefs alcoholism. He had been a stupendous drunk.

The drinking had begun in high school. A baseball batting champion who was also terribly shy, Sawyer started to suffer attacks in which he sweated profusely. Psychologists on both sides

of his case agree that he has a chronic anxiety syndrome and an obsessive-compulsive disorder. ITm like a bubble ready to burst. . . . Is somebody going to find fault in me? Is somebody going to cut me down to the size of an ant? Will I mess something up and embarrass myself? he once wrote in describing his fears. ill canIt let anybody find out who I really am, what kind of person I am. So Iill be a loner, mysterious? For much of his adult life Sawyer answered these anxieties by drinking as much as a liter of vodka a day. For years, he went in and out of treatment programs, none of which seemed to work. There were three DUI arrests, in which authorities clocked his blood alcohol percentage at well over .4. The legal standard for drunkenness is .1, and one of the detectives who interrogated Sawyer in the murder investigation claims that his .45 reading was Ilthe highest one live ever seen on a living person?

ilPeople told us to kick him out of the housef says Farwell Sawyer, Ilbut we swore up and down that the only thing that would solve this was love? An upright, retired school superintendent, Farwell Sawyer moved his son from Shabbona, Illinois, to Clearwater into his condo in the walled community of Imperial Cove.

Then, at age thirty-two, through some miracle of intervention and death-rattling awareness, Tom Sawyer got straight. In October 1985 he entered a county detox center and spent a couple of months in rehabilitation. Afterward Sawyer hooked up with Alcoholics Anonymous and moved into the York Apartments. He put his life under fierce control: every day he copied the days reading from A Day at a Time, every night he attended meetings at the Serenity Club. Compulsive and private, he kept records of what he wore so that he never dressed in the same outht on consecutive days. Sawyer participated in the group rituals of the community of recovering alcoholics: softball games, gratitude dinners, trips to the House of Hope

21 sEPTi-MBI-Lk i989

Police detective Peter Fire awyer certainly acted like a sex murderer. He broke into a sweat and mapped his brow as questioning began. to study family dysfunction. It was life in a cocoon of anonymity. Sawyerls mother made his fa-

favorite foods for him,
ham and creamed
potatoes, and his fa-
ther brought them to
him at the York
Apartments still hot.
He showed up for
his job at the golf
course at precisely
6:30 AM. and was
an uncomplaining
workhorse. Every
night he sat in a chair
on the concrete slab just outside his
back door and drank tea with one
eye on the Sunshine Mall. Years be-
fore, it had been a rolling orange
grove. Now its sprawling parking
lot was a hangout for rowdies.
Janet Staschak shared that con-
crete slab with Sawyer, but her life
was far less regulated. Hard up for
money, she shared her place first with one straight couple,
then, briefly, with a gay pair. The man in the first couple dealt
drugs and got into arguments with customers; when the cou-
ple moved out, in the fall of 1986, Staschak was still fright-
ened enough to change the locks.
Then over Halloween weekend she disappeared. The police
found Staschak's body in her water bed two days later, face
down, nude, with wire and tape marks on her ankles. The
Daily Bread, the religious book that she read every day-for,
like Tom Sawyer, she sought structure from a book-was
open to a section about the second coming, iiBetter Start
Packing? and the porcelain Bible in the downstairs living
room was knocked over.
THE POLICEMEN WHO INVESTIGATED JANET STASCHAK
murder continue to firmly believe they got their man. liMost
definitelyf says Sergeant Gerard McAuley. llThere is no
doubt in my mindf says Peter Fire, the veteran detective who
interrogated Tom Sawyer.
Fire is like a war veteran who, once having adopted a cause,
never abandons it. This was no llsmoking gunjl in which cops
arrived on the scene and followed a set of clues to an obvious
perpetrator; bit was a whodunitii requiring skilled deduction,
says Fire, a street-smart veteran of more than twenty years.
Sawyer became the prime suspect in the case within hours
of the discovery of the body, because his behavior seemed
bizarre. When Fire's partner, John Dean, asked Tom Sawyer
where he had been Saturday night, he got a suspicious re-
sponse. liHels not answering. And I look up at Mr. Sawyer,
and hes bright red, like I embarrassed himf Dean later testi-
hed. liAnd I said, Did I say something to offend you? I mean, I
don,t know-are you married, where is your wife, were you
out fooling around? . . . And he said, lNo no; and thatis when
he got into lhowj he had come home from the AA meeting

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and went to bed, and I thought that was kind of unusual . . . that he would get so embarrassed over a simple question? Though Dean couldn't know it, it was just this sort of encounter that caused Sawyer to break into a sweat, since he normally did not talk to outsiders about the AA meetings he attended. Then Sawyer let on to Dean that he knew that Staschak's Pontiac had been found at the Tampa airport. Dean didn't know that a rookie cop stationed outside Stasehak's apartment had given Sawyer this information. When the police asked Sawyer to come to the station house the following afternoon, pointing out that he knew certain important details in the case, Tom Sawyer bragged about it. Few people ever had time to talk to him, but the cops wanted to hear him out. Wm important, they need me, I'm the only one that knows when lherl car leftf he told a friend from AA. He told his father he was only doing his duty.

What was going on in Tom Sawyer's mind is less significant, though, than what the cops decided about him. Picking up on Sawyer's Ilvibes as Fire puts it, they became convinced that Tom Sawyer had committed the crime. He certainly exhibited the odd mannerisms of a sex murderer. Sure enough, he broke into a sweat and mopped his forehead as the questioning began. Moreover, he confessed that he had liked the girl next door and hadn't dated anyone in a while.

Fire played the good cop well, and the role suited his nature. A devoted family man, Fire is passionate, humorous, affable. But the interrogation was a male bonding ritual of sports and girl talk, even violence against women. IIYou ain't been having any sex? Fire said early on, seemingly appalled. II . . If I was a single guy like you living next door to her, she would turn me on, too. . . . She had a nice little body on her, right?

The younger, more angular-featured John Dean fell just as easily into the role of tough cop. Fire had been educated on the streets, but Dean was a college graduate, a former history teacher. He was single, and his process-oriented, mechanistic approach was a cold wash over Fire's priestly intimacy.

IIWhat causes you anxiety? What gets under your skin? he said almost at the beginning of the interrogation, and later, when results of a lie detector test came back, he sneered at Sawyer, IIWhat's your next excuse? Dean's scrutiny unnerved Sawyer, who stammered, III, I, Pd say, if I was you, Id call me a fuckin' liar,

That moment occurred hours into the session, when things had come unglued, when the small cell with the hidden mike and the door that locked from the outside was rancid with cigarettes and weary jokes about Pete Fire's marriage. Fire and Dean had started with a simple technique that often brought quick results: getting their suspect to present a scenario of how the crime could have taken place. But the hours ticked by relentlessly, and Sawyer still hadn't broken.

III think you're a pretty sharp guy, I think you watch a lot of cop showsf Dean said, adding that cops working on a case get tltunnel vision" to the point where they need an outsider's theories. Sawyer finally responded to this flattery by proudly creating his own scenario of a sexual murder, unaware that he was being prodded into supplying details of the crime.

At about 8 P.M., after four hours of interrogation, the trap closed; Dean easuallyread Sawyer some of his Miranda rights, Fire doing his best to distract the suspect by lingering Sawyer's glasses, remarking on how similar they were to his own. And then suddenly both cops were telling a stricken

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Sawyer—who protested, IIAAll that was a game—that the scenario he had laid out was too Iprecised and close to the actual facts in the case for him not to have been the murderer. Then the interrogation continued for twelve more hours.

III was never there, I was never with her this weekend,,, Sawyer said for perhaps the thirtieth time; it was getting on toward midnight now.

IIBut I believe you were there? Fire responded.

IlWell I don't care what you believe?

I>You don't care? I don't feel that way about you. Is that the way you feel?

I>Right now, yeah?

In the tense gamesmanship of the confessmnal, Sawyer's resistance seemed only to further convince the cops of his guilt. Fire was religious, and fingering the crucifix around Sawyer's neck, he told Sawyer it was his duty to confess. He offered a redemptive message: if Sawyer confessed, he would be saved a first-degree murder conviction and thus (though he never said this, it lay just below the surface) the chair. Over and over he said that what had happened was an accident, that he was doing Sawyer a favor by giving him this chance to explain himself rather than leaving the outcome to an unsympathetic jury. Often Fire sounded like a priest. I>You didn't mean to hurt this girl. It's in your eyes, he said.

Meanwhile, Dean warned of worldly punishment: a return to alcoholism. He continually invoked the procedural language of Alcoholics Anonymous. I>How long did it take you to realize you had a drinking problem? he said, meaning that just as Sawyer had had to admit to his alcoholism before becoming sober, he must admit to the murder too. Dean paved the way for the confession by harping on the blackouts Sawyer used to suffer after his daily liter of vodka dosed with Squirt, from which he would come to vomiting bile. Dean suggested that Sawyer had suffered another blackout, but a dry one, during Staschak's killing.

In the end, it was the mechanistic and not the redemptive approach that convinced Tom Sawyer he was guilty of the murder. The first major break in the cops' interrogation was their misuse of a polygraph test and its results. Having asserted repeatedly that he had never been inside Staschak's apartment, Sawyer lunged at the offer of a lie detector test to back him up. With some clairvoyance he said, I'm just so nervous now, I might flunk it by shaking it, and then failed it. (The test was given in violation of polygraphers' codes, when the subject was under stress; a later test showed Sawyer to be telling the truth when he said he had never been in Staschak's apartment.) Dean pronounced Sawyer a "fucking liar" and said that his heart pumped the needles right off the screen?

It was then about one in the morning, and Sawyer had been up for almost twenty-four hours. He was so tired that there were long pauses and yawns on the tape. He put his head down on the table, and began to waver.

I>I honestly believe that I didn't do it and that I was never in there?

I>Is that what you really believe? Dean asked.

I>That's what I really truly, honestly believe. And I pray to God if I did do it, I'm punished for it?

I>I . . . Be straight with me right now. Are you positive that you didn't do it in your own mind right now?

I>Not right now, I'm not? (Continued on page 55)

letogmpther Polly Brown
takes a look across (ht sexual dima't
SINCE EARLY CHILDHOOD, I HAVE BEEN DRAWN TO
the world of men and boys. I wanted, more than
anything, to emulate my two much Older brothers
and believed, if I were successful, I would have the
key to the unboring life. At the age of ten I could
smoke cigarettes (and inhale), swear like a sailor,
and carry on a reasonable conversation about car-
buretors. My ambition was to be a wrestler. My
heroes were soldiers and adventurers.

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LATER, AS A FEMINIST, I OUTGREW MY EARLY AMBITIONS. I came to realize that men, too, are disenfranchised. But perceptions from my childhood and adolescence continue to influence the way I view the world and shape my relationships with men and women. A year ago I decided to photograph my childhood fantasies and do what I had once so wanted to do—hang out with the guys.

These photographs are about men in the process of creating their own myths in the safety of men-only environments. In sports, religion, politics, and combat, men of different races, classes, and cultures communicate by doing things together; traditions no longer necessary for survival have been transformed into rituals. As a recent article about boxing gibes, *Violent egomama* just isn't a prescription for success in a postindustrial economy?

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masculine image-to boys gaining a sense of power
through their relationships with fathers and mentors.
iiThere is little that makes a father prouder than to see
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his five- or six-year-Old son acting like a ilittlc manf
wrote Herb Goldberg in The Hazards ofBez'ng Male.
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-Native American Chant

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_Native American chant
MO I'Hl'k IONltK 3 I

Filmmaker Spike Lee is on a razor's edge: will his militant message cut it in Hollywood?

WALK IN: U Emmy ACREs AM) A Mum; FILM-works Spike Isceis shrewdly mmcd film production company, and the first thing that hits .mui full force, is Spike Lee. One wall of the loft is dominated by a bigger than higgcr-than-life head shot of Lee from an advertisement for Barn: s New York, lips purscd in a suppressed smilc, clad in dcpnrtmcnt-smrc chic except for a haschall cap and diamond stud earring.

It takes :1 minute to realize that hunched On the stairs below thc picturc, looking much smaHtiitIian " is the five-foot-six-inch auteur filtnmak i mschl. His jams ridc far ahovc his skinny ankles, his fcct arc shoved in high-mppcd gray and Mack Vikcs. His gangly legs and Arms arc twisted around each other. 01lcc hc spots Ll visitor, hc disappears for several hours.

When hc I'ciurns, hc comcs flying down the spiral stairs from the Ioftk ilppcr lcx'cl. As hc VVVV

BY PEGGY ORENS'I'EIN

Photograph hV Antonin Krutochvil

Q.

passes, he's asked about the image on the leather medallion he wears around his neck. "That's a black youth caught in the cross hairs of a sniper's rifle," he spits before disappearing again. Those are his first words of the day.

SPIKE LEE, As He SELLS 1'1; CAN 151-: Vllinzl) As H FRleK-ot-natute black filmmakeifl but hes also a cultural force. At the age of thitty-two he has already directed commercials for Nike and lesse jackson, videos for Miles Davis and Anita Baker; published three books; as well as written, directed, produced, and starred in three independent films. His first two _S/Je's Gotta Have It, a "seriously sexy comedy" about a liberated woman's simultaneous relationships with three men, and the musical School Daze, a frank critique of the tension between light- and dark-sl:inned blacks on an all-black college campus-foeused exclusively on relationships among blacks. But it's Leels third and finest film, Do the Right Thing. that has been called his most controversial: in it he confronts the conflict between races.

Do t/Je Right iIi/Jing, a film inspired in part by the Howard Beach murder and the police-related deaths of Michael Stewart and Eleanor Bumpurs, traces the incendiary course of the hottest day of the year on one block in Brooklyn. During its Violent climax, a white policeman murders a black youth, strangling him to death with his billy club. The neighbors A In search of "I. "right thing": Mookio (Spike Loo) work: for a piece 0' "Is pie . . . respond by torehing the only white-owned business on the block. When the melee dies down, two quotes roll across the dark screen, punctuated by a final image of Martin Luther Kiiig,jr., and Malcolm X smilin side by side. The first quote, from King, cautions us that Vince is llimpraetieal" and lkimmoralf1 But its the secon aleolm X, that has stifled applause in some theaters used in self-defense is llintelligencef ltls hardly yone in the audience (especially some of the ihoose as the "right thing,

But Lee doesnE e
other-eheek stuff
. ltThat turn-the-
. ii he says. llAll

34 Slzll'lileB 12R I 9

people want to talk about is the burning of Salls Pizza. It just shows people donk care about black life; they devalue black life. Theyite more concerned that white people's property got destroyed. Fuck Salls Pizza. We have to protect black life?

His 4:30 IN THE Al-"l'ssz00N ANI) SPIKE lJili ls READY FOR lunch. He shoots out of Forty Acres and onto Brooklyns DeKalb Avenue, moving frighteningly fast for a man his size.

A few blocks behind him, DeKalb cuts across Flatbush, the eityls pipeline to Manhattan, and iron-jog over to the Fulton Street M'

jamie ()Verstreet in 5126's (iott his favorite Italian restaurai hails him. "Hey, Spike? ll /

kids stare at him, start passes a playground, ai schoolboy voices rise in j

Lee has lived in this ne torie" Fort Greene but als all of his life, and he cant over his choice to work and ll .

Brooklyn?" he says, annoyed. " . sneakers, and ride subways, and dont have a drivers license? What difference does it make? Lee's feelings aside, its rare to find a Brooklyn boy who, when he crosses the bridge to fame, doesn't also abandon family and community to cross the one to Manhattan.

tSpike was kind of chosen? says his father, Bill, a round-bellied, balding jazz bassist who scores his sons films and still lives in the brownstone where Spike and his four younger siblings grew up. "I think there was something

spiritual about it. He inherited it from his family,
the ability to make a statement.
Shelton J. Lee (who was nicknamed Spike early on by his mother, Jacquelyn) comes from a line of fighters: his great-grandfather, William James Edwards, was a disciple of Booker T. Washington, and founded a school in Snow Hill, Alabama, modeled on Washington's principles of learning and labor. During his younger years, Spike was immersed in black culture and history. Bill took the family with him to gigs at jazz clubs and folk festivals, where he backed musicians like Odetta and Miles Davis. Jacquelyn, a schoolteacher (who died suddenly in 1976), brought home books by black writers and took her children to all-black art exhibits. Spike's only sister, Joie, twenty-seven, a tiny, rivetingly beautiful woman who plays Spike's fictional sister in *Do the Right Thing*, remembers that her brother was always a terrible tease. "Spike used to get these weird things in his head," she says, sitting on the stairs at Forty Acres, squabbling about Lee lore with her brother David. Earlier awhile, he decided David had a crush on Annette Funicello. David, twenty-eight, a stocky photographer who shoots the stills for Spike's movies, rolls his eyes behind his glasses. "David hardly knew who Annette Funicello was, but Spike kept saying, 'David, you know you love Annette.'"³ "I don't remember that," says David, squinting. But both David and Joie do remember their oldest brother's

insistence on maintaining a black identity. Since Jacquelyn taught at the predominantly white St. Ann's School in Brooklyn Heights, the Lee children could attend the school gratis. But Spike and his brother Chris (who sounds like the family's real rebel: a former graffiti artist, he is currently, according to his father, a knowledgeable street mar?) opted for public schools where there would be other black students. Joie, David, and their youngest brother, Cinque, chose St. Ann's. Spike used to point out the differences in the schooling, the differences in our friends, that all the people I knew were white? says Joie. And by the time I was a senior I was being channeled into white colleges? Joie and David did head off to white colleges_Joie to Sarah Lawrence and David to Yale-but Spike chose Morehouse, the all-black alma mater of his father and grandfather.

At Morehouse Spike majored in mass communications and began to dabble in super-8 films before moving on to a master's program in film at New York University, a program for which he has little fondness. As one of two blacks in his class (the other, Ernest Dickerson, has been cinematographer on all of Leel's films), Lee immediately provoked controversy: in a ten-minute short titled The Answer, he posited what would happen if a black screenwriter were hired to remake D. W. Griffith's Birth of a Nation. It was told I was whisked away from being kicked out! he says now, with the suppressed grin of the Barneys ad. They really didn't like me saying anything bad about D. W. Griffith, for sure?

Eleanor Hamerow, head of the graduate film division at NYU, answers a query for an interview about Lee with an exasperated lth, n07 Look, she says. It's okay to take on The Birth of a Nation, but you have to do it so the film you make is intelligible. His film was simply badly executed . . . it was hard to figure out what was going on, it was muddled?

In spite of the setback, Lee went on to win the Student Academy Award, which gave him enough confidence and credibility to raise \$40,000 toward a film centered on a bicycle messenger called, appropriately enough, Messenger. The capital wasn't enough. A tussle with the Screen Actors Guild over a request to pay his actors experimental film rates killed the movie before the cameras rolled. Messenger was prophetic, at least in title. By the time the experience was over, he was more determined than ever to get his message out.

Starting with the Public Enemy rap song declaring Elvis Presley a straight-out racist . . . simple and plain . . . mother fuck him and John Wayne," Do the Right Thing draws a line through American popular culture. Spike Lee forces people to take sides, not in a racial contest, but on either the passive or the active section of the public theater. The escapist principle of commercial pop holds no sway here; wake up? the words that ended School Daze, also begin Do the Right Thing, the story of a community uprising on the hottest day of summer, because Lee is fighting the complacency induced by mainstream entertainment.

Lee's presentation of a black screen world does not revise Hollywood conventions-it counteracts them.

As a student of film history, trained in a university

A year later Lee '85 braced to shoot 5/793 GOI.W . . . Buggin' on (Giancarlo Ponzilio) bugs out q! u yuppie who will lose III! snooker. A

Have It-according to the motto he adopted from

Malcolm X, by any means necessary? In this case, the means turned out to be fast and cheap: Shells Gotta Have It was

filmed in guerrilla-style in twelve days for a now-legendary

budget of \$175,000. At one point, money was so tight that the film processing lab threatened to auction off the negative if he didn't pay up. They had so little money, says Barry Alexander Brown, Leels film editor, that the sound-track machine was taken away from them while they were trying to edit. When the film opened, in the summer of 1986, black audiences flocked to it. The predominantly white art-house set loved it too, for its novelty and crossover appeal. The film caught fire, grossing over \$7 million (Continued on page 43)

Photographs (6)1989 Universal City Studios, Inc.
film school, he had to learn movie grammar through nonblack models; in depicting the rarely filmed black experience, Lee has had to defy those same models, recognizing and rethinking the racial biases inherent in this long-segregated art form. By ignoring the white speech, cosmetics, and mannerisms that define mainstream motion pictures, Lee implies a critique of the ilnormalfl lluniversall, white lifestyles that Hollywood customarily enshrines and subtly empowers.

If Do the Right Thing had (Continued on page 46)

BY ARMOND WHITE

MOTHER JONES 35

How Bush failed the heroes of Tiananmen Square

—
By Orville Schell

LOOKING OUT ACROSS THE VAST EXPANSE OF BEIJING'S Tiananmen Square last May, as banners extolling democracy and freedom of expression fluttered over hundreds of thousands of demonstrators, allowed one to hope, for the moment, that at last China had broken its cycle of failed reform and was on its way to becoming a more open and democratic society. But hardly did the Chinese have a chance to savor this heady moment before dark forces of authoritarianism, never far beneath the surface, suddenly re-emerged.

As tanks, armed personnel carriers, and soldiers toting automatic weapons shot their way into Tiananmen Square, China was sent reeling back into yet another interregnum of lawless violence. The attack was, perhaps, an inevitable outcome of the schizophrenic reforms of Deng Xiaoping, who tried to transform China's economy while leaving its political system imprisoned by a Marxist-Leninist-Maoist past. Many Westerners, perhaps enamored of the way Chinese society seemed to be becoming more like thus? allowed themselves to be deceived into believing that economic reform would inexorably bring about political change. Western hotels, modern office buildings, foreign

television shows, American junk food, and a new cosmopolitan elite helped obscure China's actual disassembly. But during this one historical blink of the eye in May, it looked as if the imbalance between economic and political reform might be righted. It appeared possible at last that China's new generation, which had been reared in the atmosphere of an open door economy, could begin to hold its government accountable. The demonstrations in May were, after all, the culmination of a series of important events.

In January of this year, the dissident astrophysicist Fang Lizhi set the movement in motion when he boldly wrote an open letter to Deng Xiaoping calling on him to release all political prisoners, including the celebrated Democracy Wall activist Wei Jingsheng. Fang's letter was followed in February by an unprecedented petition of support signed by scores of other prominent Chinese intellectuals. Then, on April 17, following the death of liberal ex-Party General Secretary Hu Yaobang, students poured into Tiananmen Square in a mass demonstration that served as the trigger for a deluge of ensuing protests.

These demonstrations reached a zenith of sorts when, just before the May 15 Visit by Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, several thousand students again marched to the Square and, demanding more freedom of expression, began a hunger strike. Soon they were joined by hundreds of thousands of other exuberant supporters. But equally as startling as the enormity of the crowd was the way in which Beijing itself seemed transformed by this presence at its figurative center. Whereas previously the citizenry of the capital had been disillusioned, self-centered, and cynical about China's future, now people seemed suddenly possessed by a sense of optimism, hope, and generosity.

Even though police were no longer in the streets, there were few thefts. And although people's lives were no easier than before, inflation no lower, and living conditions no better, there was nonetheless a new feeling of fraternity, openness, and goodwill the likes of which I had never experienced during fifteen years of visiting China.

Like a musical score that rises with every measure in a seemingly endless crescendo, each day brought not only more people

into the Square, but different segments of society, so that by the time Gorbachev arrived, hundreds of thousands of students had streamed into the Square, and by the time he left, older intellectuals had joined in as well. Private merchants, unemployed youths, service workers, professionals, and finally even factory workers began to appear beneath crude hand-lettered banners. In the best tradition of Gandhi, Martin Luther King, J12, and other advocates of nonviolent protest, this enormous crowd made its point and ruled the Square in an orderly fashion. Their demands were modest and reasonable, for such things as an independent student union and newspaper, a dialogue with leaders, and the retraction of a vicious editorial in the Peoples Daily, which had called the students llconspiratorial sowers of chaos." What makes the events that followed seem all the more tragic now is that it would have been so easy for Chinese Communist Party leaders to concede on those meager points and avoid the cataclysm that followed. Far from losing face and self-esteem, by yielding to the students the Party would have gained goodwill and support, for there was hardly a demonstrator in the Square who, during those early days, thought in terms of challenging the Party or overthrowing the government. Most students I interviewed were not even demanding a multiparty system or free elections. But offended by the seeming presumptuousness of these spontaneous supplicants, the Party met the students, demands first with silence, then with military force, leaving indelible images of the bloody and sorrowful denouement etched in the memories of people all over the world. It is a bitter irony, indeed, that for speaking out in a llpeoplesl republic, the people were crushed by a llpeoplelsll army. But another consequence of the Tiananmen Massacre may prove even more tragic for China over the long run: in a historical instant, Deng and his hard-line cohorts transformed a peaceful and hopeful protest into slaughter, thereby alchemizing a generation of reform-minded students into angry revolutionaries.

rescoH

Bush recently completed a multimillion-dollar deal for consirudion of a hotel and golf course in Shanghai.

WHILE THIS TRAGEDY WAS AN ABJECT FAILURE FOR THE Chinese Communist Party, the role of our own president was hardly more lustrous. When George Bush (who is often proclaimed by his administration to be a China expert perforce of his tenure in Beijing as U.S. representative in the liaison office in 1974-75) might have made a difference by speaking out boldly for democracy and human rights in China, he repeatedly remained silent. And when he hnally did decide to say something about the fate of student democrats in the Square, it was only after many of them were already dead. For many months, the record of our government has been a litany of tepid responses and missed opportunities, the administration seemingly more concerned with neutralizing congressional anger than supporting the democracy activists.

When Fang Lizhi wrote his letter to Deng in January calling for the release of political prisoners, there was no echo of support from our government. When Fangis letter was followed by a petition of support from scores of other' intellectuals, the United States made no comment. And when Fang was prevented by Chinese security police from attending a farewell barbecue for Bush to which he had been invited by the U.S. embassy just before the president left Beijing, our chief executive did nothing more than express llregret? Even when the students began taking to the streets in mid-April and were hailed by tens of thousands, our president said nothing. In spite of his obsessive patronage of llfree-

dom fightersll in Nicaragua and dissidents in the Soviet Union, Bush missed the chance to go resolutely on the record in support of the new democracy movement in China. One was left to wonder how Bush might have reacted if hundreds of thousands of Nicaraguans peacefully marched in the name of freedom and democracy through the streets of Managua, ora God forbidl-what he would have done if they were hred upon and killed en masse by the Sandinista Army. Again and again in China, which is, after all,

red, white, 8. blue

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the worlds most populous tlcommunis th

country, our government gave the imprese

sion that when it came to human rights

abroad, the United States had two separate

standards of application: one for China, and

another for the rest of the world. The Re-

publican Partyk bizarre new alliance with

the Chinese Communist Party created

strange bedfellows, joined by what ap-

peared to be a new transnational and trans-

ideological establishmentarianism. It was an

axis that, amazingly enough, continued

right up through the massacre of june 4,

when Bush, still demurring a candid assess-

ment of what had happened, said only that

lithe situation is very, very murkyf'

Even after Deng re-emerged on television

a few days later to praise the Peoples Libera-

tion Army's suppression of what he called a

tlcounterrevolutionary" protest, Bush re-

fused to hold Chinese leaders directly

accountable. Instead, there was much talk of

the ilimportancell of our relationship with

China, as if such an abstraction was more

important than actual deportment.

llThere's a relationship over there that is

fundamentally important to the United

States which I want to see preservedfl said

Bush, making many wonder just how far he

would be willing to go before considering

direct censure of Chinal's leaders. Bush did

finally agree to halt sales of weapons to

China in the aftermath of the massacre, but

only after members of the Senate Foreign

Relations Committee threatened to hold

hearings on his policy of inaction. And, just

after public executions of democracy dem-

onstrators began, Bush announced the sus-

pension of high-level meetings between US.

and Chinese officials and the postponement

of consideration on loans by international

institutions in which the United States was

involved. But once again, it was too little too

late. ilThere is a balance between what you

do and when you do it," said White House Chief of Staff John Sununu in a piece of almost complete gibberish. "The president is very sensitive to the fact that he wants to do all this in exactly the right way. As he has gone along, he has rejected actions and rhetoric that might have been more gut-satisfying and less effective."

The logic of all this was hard to follow. The Bush administration seemed to be suggesting that harsher actions would only hurt the Chinese and trigger a more severe crackdown, a thought that might have seemed bitterly ironic to demonstrators as they were marched to public rally grounds to be shot at close range in the back of the head. For them, the only conceivable protection was protestation by foreign governments willing to back words and symbolic acts of censure with real sanctions. So out-of-proportion were U.S. responses to the magnitude of the Chinese governments transgressions, one might have thought that the United States had real cause to fear China; that it was China rather than the United States which had the preponderance of power and moral authority rather than the other way around. But the truth is that the Chinese government had much more to lose in this wager. While China is Americas thirteenth-largest trading partner, the United States is their third-largest. While China is a Third World country, the United States is the most powerful country on the globe. Why, then, was George Bush so timid and seemingly eager to act as if he were hostage to Deng Xiaoping?

Old-time cold warriors must have been scratching their heads as they watched the U.S. government reversing its engines while progressives and liberals who had once made excuses for excesses committed by socialist countries suddenly found themselves decrying Chinas actions. Like some Alice-in-Wonderland landscape transfigured before our eyes, everyone seemed to be changing sides, making one wonder if the United States isn't just as adept as the Chinese Communist Party at canceling out former incorrect lines and enthrone new ones.

No one was asking Bush to break off diplomatic relations with China, to support armed freedom fighters in an effort to overthrow the Deng government, or to land marines, although these are all policy options that Americans have exercised in other parts of the globe. Early on, it would have sufficed for Bush simply to have spoken up forcefully for human rights and against the holding of political prisoners. After the massacre he might have stated clearly our revulsion at Deng Xiaopings barbarity, and then detailed a set of progressively severe responses that the Chinese government could expect if it continued to flagrantly violate human rights. The annals of U.S. diplomacy are certainly rich with such precedents. Because of apartheid, economic sanctions were imposed on South Africa; after Jaruzelskis declaration of martial law against Solidarity, Polands most-favored-nation status was

withdrawn; fearful that a communist government was taking root in Grenada, the marines were sent in; and to isolate Castro, diplomatic recognition of Cuba was denied. But aside from Bush's fraternity with Chinese leaders and his lack of foresight and courage, by 1989 another equally important tie hampered US. support for pro-democracy forces in China: considerable U.S. economic interests. Since China opened up to the outside world over a decade ago, some ten thousand foreign joint ventures have been established,

and over \$47 billion in foreign capital have been invested in China. U.S. trade with China skyrocketed from \$1.2 billion in 1978 to \$14.3 billion last year. Americans poured more than \$3.5 billion of direct investment into the more than five hundred Sino-U.S. joint ventures, and after Hong Kong and Japan, the United States became China's next largest trading partner. These new economic interests in China had a predictable way of neutralizing the ardor for democracy not only among many U.S. businesspeople, but among government leaders as well.

As Secretary of State James Baker bluntly noted in the House Foreign Affairs Committee at the end of June: Human rights has got to be a fundamental keystone and basis for American foreign policy, but there are also other considerations. . . . And the geopolitical and economic relationship between the Peoples Republic of China and the US. is important?

We were starkly reminded of the momentum Sino-U.S. deal-making had gathered when just after the Tiananmen Massacre CBS News learned that Prescott Bush, George Bush's brother, was doing his part to cement U.S.-China relations by signing a multimillion-dollar deal involving the construction of a Western-style hotel and golf course outside of Shanghai. It was precisely this sort of economic interest that seemed to be making it so difficult for the president to speak out forthrightly about what was happening politically in China.

By trying to propitiate an aging and unpopular leadership that was in the final process of eclipse in order to maintain the United States' short-term economic interest, though, the president was simultaneously alienating the next generation of Chinese leaders for whom the Tiananmen Massacre would be their seminal political experience. By the end of June, Chinese students from almost seventy colleges and universities had begun protesting U.S. policy in a letter-writing campaign to members of Congress calling for stricter economic sanctions against their country's government.

Some people say that sanctions will hurt the Chinese people? said Harvard graduate student Pei Minxin dismissively, but I know what they are going through. . . . And the psychological torture from the past two weeks—people being shot en masse, people having to lie, having to turn their loved ones in—is far worse than any other deprivation? But as the Peoples Liberation Army finished clearing away the debris of barricades, burned-out military vehicles, and buses, and as workers patched bullet holes and hosed down bloodstains around Tiananmen Square, and even though twenty-seven demonstrators had already been publicly executed, Secretary of State James Baker still appealed for congressional restraint on sanctions against the Chinese government. On June 22, in another of his vague comments on China, Bush told reporters, China—we're all very concerned about that? But he said no more.

For those Chinese who demonstrated, and even for those who only sympathized with the demonstrators, this is a fearful and dispiriting time. As repression and executions became this summer's hallmarks in China, the dream of reform vanished. For an instant in Tiananmen Square, Chinese students, intellectuals, and workers allowed themselves to imagine that through peaceful protest they might be able to goad their government into greater democratization. But, as it turned out, this hope was an overly grand, if intoxicating, reverie. When confronted by the vengeful wrath of their own spurned leaders and the insipid response of foreign governments such as our own, Chinese new democrats were left with no choice but to seek refuge underground. With no scenario, nor even a fantasy, for peaceful change remaining, the Chinese people had few alternatives other than more violent confrontation with their government. From the Chinese perspective the real tragedy of these past few months may turn out not to be the carnage in Tiananmen Square, the manhunt for 11 counterrevolutionaries or the executions that followed—although these are hideous enough—but the way in which Deng Xiaoping's vindictiveness has ended the promise of reform in China. And from the U.S. perspective, the tragedy is that by offering such belated and timid support for the forces of democracy, our current administration set itself apart from Chinese upcoming generation of political leaders. Even unanimous House support at the end of June for tough economic sanctions, delivered with a warning that the whole world is watching China's suppression of human rights, will not erase the effect of Bush's reluctance to act earlier. Unlike the past generation of Chinese, which was seduced by Marxist-Leninist thought, the present generation has been animated by the very principles of democracy and freedom of expression that we purport to hold as the essence of our own political culture. Having at last won these young Chinese over without the Marines, the CIA, or power politics, it is perplexing indeed that, at the moment of their greatest need, our government has not more wholeheartedly supported them.

Orville Schell is the author of *Discos and Democracy: China in the Throes of Reform* (Anchor Books, 1989).

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MOTHER jONES 39

TRIPS

JMAHBy Steve Cbapple

.01

A Montana welcoming
commlnee (above); a
man tending his horses
on Last Chance Gulch
In Helena (below).

Montana: N ot a Movie

'I'all tales,
small lies,
western myths,
and truth under
the Big Sky.

SizPleM man 19 8 9

EW YEARS BACK, TWO FRIENDS AND I
were snowed out of a camping trip in
the Beartooth Mountains by a freak
August blizzard, although in Montana
no snowstorm can ever be considered
truly out-of-season. By way of compensation, I sug-
gested that we stop at the Grizzly Bar and inquire
about the cat who drank bourbon. My friends had
never heard of :1 cat that could drink beer, let alone
bourbon. This, I thought, would take their minds off
the weather.

The Grizzly Bar was one of four buildings in
Roscoe, a town that sits beside the rocky Rosebud
River in a mountain valley stolen from Switzerland
and dropped at the edge of the plains seventy miles
southeast of Billings, the states
largest city. Mule deer still
wander through Roscoe, and
mountain goats white as marsh-
mallows sometimes appear at
dawn on the erngs of the canyon
wall upriyer.

In the old days, the owner of
the Grizzly Bar would invite pa-
trons to buy his special cat a
drink. Customers would ante up
fifty cents. The harkeeper would
pour :1 full jigger glass. Tabby
would lap it up like cream.

After a few months or so, the
poor cat would die of liver complications. The
owner would train another victim, and so on. These
cats were taught to drink with a bit of canned tuna
fish smeared on the rim of the glass.

No animal lovers protested in those days, the early
Htties. Those days in Montana they also had a bar
near Anaconda, the slag-heap smelting city next to
Buttet where buffalo were jumped off a sixty-foot
platform into a pond. Buffalo jump, they called it.
People paid even more to watch buffalo fall into
water than they did to watch cats drink bourbon.

Now this has nothing to do with why a state only a
hairsmallerinsizethanCalifornia butwithlessthana
million people seems to hold such mythic allure for
Hollywood and New York and the rest ofthe country.
It doesn't have much to do with why some of Amer-
iculs best writers, expatriates from Michigan, Nlls-
sissippi, Texas, New York, and San Francisco, Hnd
themselves holed up in Missoula or Livingston or
Helena in the midsummer of their lives.

Or perhaps it does. A little.

Though the obvious reasons can be put more
quickly: (1) Montana is ungodly cheap. A two-bed-
room Victorian house near Anaconda goes for
\$25,000. This is the result of severe and sad smoke-
stack recession, but there it is. (2) Montanans read

hooks more than they watch TV. They respect a
good novelist more than a good movie actor. (3) The
color of the mountains at dawn or the hiss of water
around a sharp granite bend in the Yellowstone
Photographs by Bud Lee (top) rmd'lo/m Reddy

River takes your breath away quicker than
bad liquor or a good orgasm. (4) The place
has the best bars in the country.

Outside of Montana, cats just don't drink
bourbon.

And in Montana you can be by yourself
and never want company. There's a
ranginess to the place that extends to the
mind. The imagination does cartwheels in
the face of a landscape bigger than itself, and
yet everything is so tangible-earth, sky,
water-that prose is lent precision.

PEOPLE LEAVE MONTANA, OF COURSE-THE
bold, the curious, the broke-and too many
Montanans now have trouble making ends
meet in a state that at the turn of the century
often ran three shifts a day in every mining,
mill, and lumber town. But in their hearts,
those expatriates in Seattle, Denver, and Los
Angeles still carry the sight of two hundred
geese rising off a held of wheat stubble, or
the feel of a really big brown trout hitting a
#14 Royal Coachman fly just when the pool
seemed fished out.

I have a hardened New York friend who
married a woman from Big Timber, a tiny
town that sits like a perfect beehive along the
banks of the middle Yellowstone. He got a
screenwriting job in LA. and took along his
wife, a schoolteacher. She had never been to
Los Angeles, never been out of Montana.

On the freeway from LAX. to Santa
Monica she burst into tears: to imagine that
Los Angeles, such a travesty against the
land, really existed!

People are plenty real in Montana.

I think of a woman in Gardiner, which is
only a clump of sandstone buildings beside
the Yellowstone River, who gathers the
town's stray dogs into her barn and cares for
them since nobody else will. Others are
poaching elk and deer a few miles upstream,
inside Yellowstone Park. These guys sell
dried deer penises to Hong Kong busi-
nessmen as aphrodisiacs. I'm sure the old
woman who loves dogs and the poachers
who chop off deer dicks with Gerber knives
say hello to each other outside the Blue
Goose Tavern, and sincerely.

I know a much younger woman who
spent a summer month maneuvering a I(ayw
ak down the length of the Yellowstone, from
the rushing white water of Yankee Jim Can-
yon near Gardiner to the muddy silent drift
of the lower river where whooping cranes
stand dumbly on the muddy banks and
stare, and where nobody ever goes. The
lower Yellowstone is prehistoric, full of
shovel-nosed sturgeon and ancient long-
billed paddlefish. Here the river ambles
through the eastern plains far from main
roads, tame grizzlies, and tourists with auto-
focus cameras. From Gardiner through Liv-
ingston, Billings, and beyond, the Yellow-
stone River is the soul of Montana, the
longest free-flowing river left in the Lower
Forty-Eight, 678 miles long. My friend was
by herself the whole way.

Montana women seem stronger than
their bicoastal sisters, and this plays a part in
the state's mythical mix, too. In fact, one

could argue that feminism in the United States was not begun on the East Coast by descendants of patriarchal Mediterranean cultures, but rather out in Montana, Wyoming, and the West, where the vote was first granted to women. Everybody recognized, as the independent film Heartland later showed, that a ranch could not be run properly by a man alone, that it always took two to resist drink and the elements. Western macho is largely an eastern myth. For instance, Americans first congresswoman was a Montanan, Jeannette Rankin, born in Missoula County, south of Glacier National Park. In 1917 and again in 1943, Rankin served as Montanas representative. I have plenty of work cut out for me the laconic rancher stated upon her first election, and she introduced the first bill to grant women citizenship independently of their husbands. But Representative Rankin was perhaps a bit too Montanan. She voted against US. entry into World War I and World War II, both. The first time, voters could agree there was no point in spilling blood to retrieve J. P. Morgans bad loans to Britain; but questioning FDR's judgment after Pearl Harbor, that was puzzling and persnickety. Rankin went back to running her ranch.

Democracy has always been very big in Montana, where more people vote per capita than in almost any other state. To Montanans, the root of democracy is simple egalitarianism. Everyone is equal. A good citizen of Old Montana, my mother, often told us a story about how an English lord once came out to Yellowstone Park on safari and got very upset when the cattle drovers sat around the campfire at night drinking coffee with him. To the stiff nobleman, Classes did not mix. To Montanans, what could be more natural? One campfire for all. If you have money and, of course, some people do, you don't show it. You all drink in the same bar, the Stockman or the Mint. This doesn't mean that after everybody drinks too much, you can't drive home in the longest, softest Cadillac. It just means that nobody will respect you unless the boots pressing down the gas pedal in that Cadillac are carefully covered in sheep shit. Always a Cadillac, by the way, never a Mercedes. The Germans fought us in two world wars and that was two too many. Besides which, only L.A.-New York types would buy foreign.

MONTANA MEN ARE TRUTHFUL ABOUT ONLY one thing. They don't understand Montana women. But this has more to do with horses than democracy.

Montana women actually like these expensive grass-chewing morons, but no true Montana man really enjoys horses unless he finds them absolutely necessary to the carrying out of certain odious tasks. A few of those immigrant writers and actors actually ride for pleasure, but those people moved to Montana late in life and don't know any better.

No wonder, then, that Hollywood and

New York always get it so wrong. Half of all
Montanans hate horses, The states most
macho political operative was a woman,
and a pacifist at that. The buffalo swim. And
the cats drink bourbon.

When you read a book about Montana
that prattles on about cowboys, Re-
publicans, and real men, then you know its
about Wyoming.

Steve Chappleis grandfather was mayor of
Billings from 1897 to 1898. Cbapples latest
book is Burning Desires: Sex in America, A
Report from the Field (Doubleday), which
be coauthored.

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MOTHI:R JONES 41

OUT OF POCKET

By John Rothchild
Fm Irresponsible!

Money Iulks,
ethics walk,
so don't bother
mixing the two,
argues one
nonbeliever.

42 SEPTEMBER 1989

HAT IF EXXON, THAT DASTARDIX OIL

spiller, acquires Herman Miller, a nice little
company that makes ergonomic chairs? llm
not predicting it, but amid the current rash of
takeovers and mergers, such treachery is possi-
ble. Its a very dangerous period for all of us who are
trying to further enrich our bank accounts without
feeling guilty, which is, after all, the goal of socially
conscious investing. One minute we own Tymshare
(a happy computer company) and the next it turns
into McDonnell Douglas (fighter planes). With such
goings-on, its impossible to manage a valuable port-
folio with the proper moral rectitude.

Letls examine a recent case: the takeover of Kraft
by Philip Morris. Before the takeover, l regarded
Kraft as a respectable stock, owners of which could
still face themselves in the mirror. As far as l can tell,
Kraft makes no weapon deadlier than mayonnaise.

(A disturbing rumor that Frusen Gladje, a Kraft ice
cream, is ancient Norwegian argot for ha woman
belongs in the kitchenll has been discredited.)

Maybe you have personal objections to Kraft Vel-
veeta, which impersonates good cheese, but it turns
out that good cheese is bad for your arteries anyway.
As far as llm concerned, as long as the United King-
dom still runs foreign colonies, you can feel better
about eating a slice of Velveeta than a chunk of
Cheddar. Of course, weld both prefer that Kraft
didnlt distribute coffee whitener, but this is not a
perfect world.

Philip Morris, on the other hand, is an admitted
cigarette company, and therels no way that a right-
thinking investor would have anything to do with
the stock, not even in a retirement account. My wife
outlawed it from our assets because her former hus-
band died of lung cancer. Since her conscientious
decision to sell in the mid-1970S, the value of Philip
Morris has increased fortyfold, so her timing was
perfect. We couldnt have lived with ourselves hav-
ing knowingly made such a proht, any more than we
could go out and sell crack cocaine to the neighbors.
When Philip Morris-having already acquired
Entenmannls baked goods, Birds Eye vegetables, and
Oscar Mayer wieners-made its public offer for
Kraft last year, it came as a terrible shock to ethical
investors and ethical eaters alike. Suddenly, the mor-
als of thousands of innocent share-
holders in Kraft stock were being
compromised.

The same thing happened to the
former shareholders of Nabisco,
who, after having assured themselves
that the sugar in the cookies did not
' come from a dictatorship, were
5' thrown in with the reprehensible R.J.
Reynolds Industries. (The renamed
. RJR Nabisco was subsequently ac-
., quired by Kohlberg Kravis Roberts
in a record buyout, thus turning the
mess over to private parties.) Then
therels Foster Medical, a provider of

home health-care equipment, recently taken over by Avon Products, which has a door-to-door sales force of underpaid housewives in the United States and the Third World (sexism and imperialism). Foster Medical has since been acquired by Abbey Medical and is now called Abbey/Foster, yet another company to check. Other examples include Lenox (tableware), acquired by Brown-Forman (whiskey), and the acquisition of Smartfood (natural popcorn) by Frito-Lay (potato chips).

You may be thinking: what's wrong with just selling your shares in a nice company that's been taken over by a nasty one? But a socially conscious investor can't do such a thing; the notion must be discredited at once. The mere announcement of a takeover almost guarantees that the value of the stock in the acquired enterprise will shoot up; so, for instance, shareholders who sold Kraft at the time Philip Morris made its bid were stuck with a huge gain. Thank goodness it wasn't me, or else I'd have profited from the business deals of a cigarette company.

Perhaps it would have been possible to salvage self-respect by selling Kraft at less than the market price, but what price would you pick? Make a slight miscalculation and once again you'd run the grave
Illustration by Richard Sala

risk of making money from Philip Morris. Inside knowledge of the impending deal might have been nudging the Kraft stock higher for months, so you'd have to go back a long way to ensure that you weren't gaining something from the cigarette aspect. Moreover, as a cosmic matter, the selling of shares in any unethical enterprise is a useless strategy. If you're selling, then somebody must be buying, so the guilt that is removed from your shoulders is simply transferred elsewhere. The net moral debit is unchanged.

Some of you may assume that you can avoid the ethical problems of takeovers by putting your money into a socially conscious mutual fund such as Dreyfus Third Century or Calvert Social Investment. Alas, I called both funds and discovered that they are not above taking a profit if a bad company acquires a good one.

Can you trust the professional ethical money managers any more than you can trust the mutual funds? A couple of years ago, I chided Franklin Research and Development in Boston for putting Aetna on its approved stock list, because Aetna insures nuclear power plants, which is almost as bad as operating one. To this day, Aetna is still on the Franklin approved list, along with Quaker Oats, which continues to sell oatmeal to the U.S. Army.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS COLUMN IS NOT to indulge in despair, but to offer advice. In fact, there is a practical way to divest your invidious holdings without the taint of profit: burn the shares. It's a safe procedure that should be carried out in a well-ventilated room, to minimize the effects of indoor air pollution.

You may want to inform your stockbroker that your shares are being disposed of in this fashion, as opposed to being tendered. There's no need to enclose the ashes, just a short note indicating the number of shares held and what has transpired, as in 9200 shares. Kraft, 9/19/89, burned? Thus the shares will be permanently retired from circulation, reducing the total market value of the takeover and creating a small but significant victory out of what could have been a moral disaster.

And if you happen to own any tainted shares that you can't bring yourself to burn, just sign them over to John Rothchild on the reverse side of the certificate and send them to me at Motherjones. I will see that they are properly disposed of.

Iolm Rotcbild is a columnist for New England Monthly. His latest book, A Fool and His Money, has just been published in paperback by Penguin.

SPIKE LEE

(Continued from page 35) (\$1.8 million in its first three weeks). Shes Gotta Have It also made Lee a star, but not necessarily as a director of serious cinema. Island Pictures, the movies distributor, had billed Shes Gotta Have It as a comedy (IINone of my movies are comedies, n Lee says), and Hollywood saw gold in the character Lee played in the

Hlm: Mars Blackmon, the fast-talking B-boy of Nola Darlingls dreams, the man who uttered the phrase lelease baby, please baby, please baby, baby, baby, baby, please/i which Spike Lee will, under no circumstances, ever repeat.

IIAfter Sheis Gotta Have It, Spike couldlve gone a long way with Mars Blackmon? says Leeis coproducer Monty Ross, a balding man with red-framed glasses who has known Lee since college. III-Ie couldlve done Mars Blackmon tbe Sequel, Mars Blackmon Part 5. But he just said to the studios, lMars Blackmon is dead? I

LEE IS STARING BELLIGERENTLY INTO HIS spaghetti. He is slumped back so the table-top hovers around his shoulders, and he talks into his food, into the palm of his bony hand, or off into space. Conversation with him proceeds along two paths: if he is asked something he doesn,t feel like answering, he drops his eyelids halfway and responds in monosyllables.

IIYeahXi

IINopeK,

III donlt know?

III donlt think about it?

When talk turns to one of his pet topics, which cling fairly narrowly to promoting Do the Right Thing, he explodes into articulate bits of pointed opinion. Right now he is ranting. IIEverything is political? he declares. IIAII films are political. If a film has no politics in it that still makes it political Ibe-causel you choose not to put politics in? If films are political, then certainly I-Iolly-wood is doubly so, with money-making its guiding principle. During a summer when the sequels to Indiana jones, Gbostbusters, and Star Trek rake in the GNP of some developing nations in a single week, there would seem to be little room for an independent filmmaker like Lee, particularly one hell-bent on causing controversy.

uHollywood sees black people as a monolithfl Lee says, looking up for a moment. IIWe had this problem with the release date for School Daze where School Daze, Shoot to Kill, and Action jackson were all set to release the same day, so they wanted to move the release date. I argued that black audiences are just as vast as white audiences. Those films had three entirely different audiences. Shoot to Kill should not be considered a black film just because Sidney Poitier is in it?

Lee can rail at the industry that feeds him only as long as he keeps making money for his studios; hels under no illusions about that. And it would seem to an outsider that hes playing the Hollywood game very well.

I-Iels made negative pickup deals with studios for both School Daze and Do the Right Thing: Hollywood pays, but Lee retains total control over the content of the films. Yet from his perspective, he's had to steer each project through a course of obstacles set up by grudging production companies.

IIWhite boys get real money, fuck up, lose millions of dollars, and still get chance after chancef he writes in his published journal

for Do the Right Thing. IINot so with us.
You fuck up one time, that's it?
To some of his critics, School Daze ap-
peared, at first, to be Leels fatal fuck-up. A
nine-song musical extravaganza that pitted
the dark-skinned Ijigaboos" on an all-black
college campus against the blue-contact-
lens-and-hair-weave llWannabees" (as in
IIWanna Be White,,), the film was trouble
from the start. Island Pictures, the dis-
tributor of Shes Gotta Have It, considered
the script, but, crying poor, turned Leels \$6
million budget down. When Columbia Pic-
tures, then headed by David Puttnam, put
up the \$6 million for the film, it was clear the
studio misunderstood the films volatile
core. "I'hey saw music, they saw dancing,
they saw comedy? Lee says.
But thatas not what university officials
saw. Lee was kicked off the Morehouse
campus during the shoot and, after the film
was edited, the United Negro College Fund
canceled plans for a benefit premiere. IIA lot
of blacks were pissed off because they said
Spike was washing our dirty laundry in pub-
licfi says Giancarlo Esposito, who plays the
tyrannical Julian in School Daze and the
angry BugginI Out in Do the Right Thing.
By the time the film was released, heads
had rolled at Columbia, and Dawn Steel,
whom Lee calls IISteely Dawn," had become
the new president. "She came in and they
never put out for the film at all under her,"
Lee says. IIThe way they saw it, its limited,
itis black. So there was no TV advertising,
no subway ads, no ads in black magazines. It
was successful because of word of month."
In fact, much to the surprise of the studio
that tried to bury it as well as to critics who
dismissed it as muddled and overblown, the
movie took off, earning back nearly three
times its budget. IIN the end, if the people
want it, it gets out? says Monty Ross Lees
coproducer. 90f course, Eddie Murphy
makes Elms that make billions of dollars for
MOTHER joxi-s 43

Sa
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Paramount, but Spike's budget is \$6 million, so he shouldn't have to make that kind of money to be considered a success. Columbia was hush-mouthed when School Daze did so well even though they hadn't pushed it. There was nothing they could say? There was plenty Lee did say, though. He vilified Columbia publicly; and privately, as he shopped Do the Right Thing around, he agonized. iiQuestion. Where do we go next? III he wrote in his journal. IITouchstone, Orion, Universal? In a way all these mother-fuckers are the same. However, going back to Columbia would be suicide?

In the end, after Paramount executives turned down the script, afraid the film would incite riots, Lee grabbed at an offer from Universal. I've been blessed with the opportunity to express the views of Black people who otherwise don't have access to power and the media? he writes in his journal from Do the Right Thing. II have to take advantage of this while I'm still bankable!

FOR TWO SOLID DAYS I FIGHT THE POWER? the furious blast against racism by rap group Public Enemy that opens Do the Right Thing, has pulsed out through the frosted glass of the Forty Acres editing room. Sometimes it's played in monotonous bits, sometimes in long stretches, sometimes backwards. Barry Brown is responsible; he's editing videos of the song with cursing intact for clubs and black cable stations and another without for Yo! MTV Raps, the one slot on the twenty-four-hour video station that lets rappers, go-go musicians, and other hard-hitting black artists have a voice.

Jazz saxophonist Branford Marsalis, Wynton's older brother, who performs on the sound track of Do the Right Thing, has stopped by for a visit, so Lee has dragged him in to check out the video's progress. Joie and the six members of the Forty Acres staff jam in behind them and peer at the tiny editing screen.

On the screen a newsreel clip of Martin Luther King, Jr., in Washington, DC, rolls, then cuts abruptly to Public Enemy in Vivid Color, faces shoved into the camera. The band jumps onto a stage with two banners unfurled behind them. One is an enormous picture of Malcolm X. The other is a silhouette of a black youth caught in the cross hairs of a sniper's rifle. Everyone in the editing room bursts into applause; Lee leans back and grins.

Spike Lee may not be caught in the cross hairs of a rifle, but he certainly is walking a razor's edge. Sometimes his adversarial swagger seems to mask his own anxiety.

When a reporter at the Cannes film festival asked Lee why he shirked the issue of drugs in Do the Right Thing, he was livid. Upon his return from France, what had now become the drug question was the first thing he discussed in any interview, without being asked. IIA lot of people asked me, if this is a ghetto, how come there's no garbage on the street, no boarded-up houses? he says. I'll tell a racist question. Drugs are everywhere. But

all of a sudden people see blacks on-screen, they want to know where are the drugs." Still, as is often the case, Lee is a lot less clear in his journal. ¹¹Not to acknowledge that drugs exist might be a serious omission in this film? he writes. ¹¹The drug epidemic is worse than the plague. . . . My goal is to show how the different social pressures that ¹¹

I's easy to put a banana into someone's gas tank and make money," Monty Ross says. ". . . Spike's movies are about politics."

lead to this are all connected? Certainly they were connected on the block he used as a location in the film. Lee and Ross, working with community members, refurbished the neighborhoods burned-out buildings and hired the Fruit of Islam, the Black Muslim Guardian Angels of the ghetto, to clear the area of crack houses before they could begin shooting.

¹¹What I'm trying to say is about racism, not about drugs? Lee insists. ¹¹made a movie about racism? It is, of course, an artist's prerogative to make those choices (once he included drugs, would it be incumbent upon him to include AIDS? gang wars?), and despite his defensiveness, Lee seems well aware of the cost of deciding what to include and exclude in order to tell a successful story. It's true that he doesn't delineate every horror of the ghetto. Instead, he presents characters with affection and humor, characters the viewers can identify with—rendering the movie's climax all the more shocking.

Diffusing anger with humor is Spike Lee's specialty, and it's a feat he performs best where his own public image is concerned. In person, as Giancarlo Esposito puts it, it's hard to push a point of view on the cat because he has his own. He speaks up. He says what he thinks. And that scares people, black and white? But the angry young man of press reports is always tempered by the characters Lee plays on-screen.

While developing *Do the Right Thing*, Lee considered casting himself as a character similar to the aptly named Buggini Out: a wired-up kid looking for an outlet, who threatens the neighborhood's white yuppie for stepping on his pristine Air Jordans, who sets loose the day's confrontations by demanding that Sal put up some black heroes on his pizzeria's all-Italian-American ¹¹Wall of Fame? But the Buggini Out role eventually went to Esposito. Instead Lee chose to play Mookie, Sal's likable delivery boy who, in a perpetual effort to keep his job, uses equal doses of humor and diplomacy to keep tensions at a minimum on all sides. Mookie doesn't have the hip-hop of Mars Blackmon or the underdog appeal of School Daze's bald, virginal Half-Pint. But he has the same light touch, the same sideways charm that diffuses Lee's earlier characters, which makes him appear nonthreatening. It's the way people want to see Spike Lee,

and he knows it; its easier to accept his anger if you've seen his humor.

Unlike Lee's earlier characters, though, Mookie finally takes a stand. When the police kill Radio Raheem-the homeless boom-box-blasting martyr-it is Mookie who picks up a trash can and calmly hurls it through Sal's plate-glass window. People don't like the fact that it's Spike Lee who starts it, Lee admits. "They feel cheated and tricked. That's the one black character that they liked. But Mookie had to act.

Everybody did?

Still, Mookie, like Lee, doesn't take his anger too far. His reaction is not an eye for an eye, but a livelihood for a life. If Radio Raheem is dead, isn't that the justified response to kill the cop who murdered him-or kill Sal? "Are you kidding?" Lee asks when that is suggested. "Do you want me to die?" I'm catching hell for this film as it is. If Sal were killed they'd be out in front of my house right now. Anyway, I just don't think black people would kill Sal. And Mookie wouldn't do that? More to the point, Mookie probably couldn't kill Sal as long as Lee is committed to making films that remain, even barely, within the realm of mainstream entertainment.

In the Right Things final scene takes place the morning after. Mookie and Sal meet on the street, and while they don't exactly reconcile, there's a sense of resolution between them, a sense, however small, of hope. The last scene was not in the original script, says Esposito. I'm proud of Spike for putting that scene in. . . . After all the

shock, there's still a chance that people can get together, can talk."

Lee's reputation has been built on his willingness to take an adversarial stance-any adversarial stance. "It's easy to put a banana into someone's gas tank and make money?"

Monty Ross says back at Forty Acres.

"Spike is right going to make a movie where black people are just saying ha ha and chee chee. His movies are about politics. If he wanted to make a movie where he was blind and put an ice cream cone on someone's head you bet they'll give him \$18 million?"

Lee is a risk-taker, there's no doubt about that. But the risks he takes are not without ambivalence. In his life and work, Lee shuttles between outsider politics and insider status, between humor and anger, between confrontation and guarded reconciliation.

He's asking questions about the country's racial chasm that few artists, or even political leaders, are willing to broach. Some of the audience for *Do the Right Thing* is bound to wince away from the theater deeply frustrated, expecting Lee to answer some of the questions he raises; but the strength of the film is its jagged conclusion, oscillating between the messages of two great men, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X.

On-screen, that oscillation comes into focus as we watch Spike Lee's imagination wrestle with the conflict. Will not going to play Jesus Christ and get up here and say, *Do this, do that, that's the right thing*? Lee says. "I just want people to think?"

After *School Daze* and *Do the Right Thing*, one wonders what Lee will confront and incite us to confront next. He's completed a new script, called *Love Supreme*, which, he admits, is far less confrontational than the last two: *Is it a romance*? Lee says. *But there'll be politics in it too. There has to be?*

Peggy Orenstein is managing editor of *Mother Jones*.

RIGHT THING

(Continued from page 35) been made twenty-five years ago-as a forecast of urban turmoil_it would have been seen as part of a general social movement and labeled a protest movie. Back then, expressions of the black experience or social discontent were supported by the mainstream as appeals to reason and requests for the tolerance and understanding of white audiences. But today, without that progressive atmosphere, Lee must enlighten the audience aesthetically. The movie credits open with "Lift Every Voice and Sing" the black national anthem, and the film is jam-packed

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with details of African American culture# music, slang, hero name-dropping. Displayed proudly, even defensively, this cultural essence proves a triumphant oppositional strategy. Transfixed by black art, humor, athletics, the audience shifts to an alternative point of view: the perspective of the disenfranchised who continue to live the fullest life possible. The regular (white) viewpoint that audiences take for granted at

the movies becomes foreign here.

That's how deep inside black America—the other America—the viewer feels while watching *Do the Right Thing*. And it's a brand new movie experience, due to the distance between Leek and white Hollywood styles. Leek's contemporaries, Eddie Murphy and Robert Townsend, in their desire to be a part of white Hollywood, have accepted the compromises (and the rewards) of producing films that maintain the status quo even while faintly mocking it. And none of the previous racial landmarks in movies were made Leek's way. Oscar Micheaux's and Spencer Williams's no-budget independent productions in the thirties and forties, and the promotion of such stars as Lena Horne and Sidney Poitier—who were permitted to fill a quota or breathe life into a stereotype—fit neatly within the film industry's white superiority framework.

Porgy and Bess, the Gershwin's faux naïf folk opera of life in a Negro enclave called Catfish Row, sums up Hollywood's history of pathetic racial hypocrisy. Its lofty gesture of cultural understanding—condescension, really—merely refashioned ethnic caricature. The setting was arch, the music false, the dialogue wrong, the whole *Charade* remote and nonthreatening. *Catfish Row* was the ultimate example of Hollywood ghettoizing black American life in a weirdly aestheticized form.

The sensibility in *Do the Right Thing* makes Spike Lee an exile on Catfish Row. His deliberate stylization of black American life pulls glory from Old Hollywood's insult. Lee formally conceptualizes black urban lifestyles, but for different reasons than the Gershwins. After the Howard Beach outrage (which inspired the African American vs. Italian American dynamics of *Do the Right Thing*), a more realistic approach could seem too raw, too slippery to contain the unresolved flux of politics and emotions. The highly theatrical, street-scene structure of *Do the Right Thing* enables Leek's characters to express a spectrum of opinions, and the film invokes the names of Tawana Brawley, Michael Stewart, and Eleanor Bumpers naturally, turning recent events into instant folklore. This same approach failed in Lee's *School Daze*, where a rangier structure dispersed the pageant of dance troupes, political set pieces, and free-for-all personal interactions into a taffy jam of race rhetoric.

Do the Right Thing contains setting shows improved craft and a stronger vision. In this stylized setting, the tough language and modern attitude sting. The interplay of text and image moves beyond the style of Hollywood musicals, pitifully imitated in *School Daze*, and creates something better: the self-conscious technique of Jean-Luc Godard's early, avowedly political comedies. (Leek's cinematographer Ernest Dickerson makes bold use of primary colors and imaginative long takes, recalling *A Woman Is a Woman* and *Made in USA*.) And there's another crucial influence: the slo-mo, cir-

cling camera shots borrowed from the personal, ethnic Cinema of fellow New York filmmaker Martin Scorsese.

Like Godard and Scorsese, Lee challenges mainstream Hollywood by manipulating the fundamental techniques of filmmaking. It's not just the subject matter that counts; every shot must be carefully considered. (A cut, as Godard said, is a political act.) This isn't the way to produce the mass anesthesia of the current movies on the civil rights movement; it's movie-making intended to provoke audience awareness.

Lee's presentation of a black point of view may seem audacious to some. But he isn't questioning the prevailing taste for Elvis Presley or John Wayne as much as he's loudly announcing a whole other world of values, ideas, and experiences. This world is what a near-century of Hollywood filmmaking has tried to deny with its kitsch view of democracy—the illusion of social harmony achieved by drowning out dissenting views. Lee's observation reveals a social situation so knotted and strained that no compromise or homily will do. *Do the Right Thing* is just a prescription, not a solution. Who can say what the right thing is?

Lee's only answer is, partly, evasive: to make films that clarify his political and social position rather than securing himself within Hollywood tradition. The politics in *Do the Right Thing* don't come from doctrine, but from the lack of privilege, from the outsider experience. The film's insistence on a nonmainstream point of view and its active engagement with racial and sexual politics set a new standard for American filmmaking. Perhaps a black artist understands this better than others whose ethnicity allows them to accept the delusion of social unity and the fallacy of apolitical art. If *Do the Right Thing* offers an object lesson to anyone, it's to other filmmakers. Armand White writes about film for the *City Sun*, a New York City weekly.

V3,

Severing the Cord

In 1971 Michael Dorris was one of the first unmarried men to adopt a very young child, a Sioux Indian he named Adam. At the time, little was revealed about Adam's past, except that his biological mother had died of alcohol poisoning. By the time he was of school age, it became apparent that Adam suffered from certain learning disabilities, later diagnosed as symptoms of fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS). In *The Broken Cord*, Dorris documents both the enormous scope of FAS (thousands of physically and behaviorally impaired children are born each year) and his own efforts to understand what was happening to his son. In this excerpt, Dorris visits Adam, now an adult, at his job in a New Hampshire bowling alley.

Illustration by William Cone

It was a good while before I visited Adam at his place of employment, and when I saw him I knew why. I walked into the almost-empty restaurant of the bowling alley—the Red Rooster—and caught a glimpse of my son through the open door that led into the kitchen. It was only the most fleeting look, snatched as he passed from view in the space of a few strides, but it was enough. He was a collection of repeated admonitions left unchecked, an impression he confirmed as, a few minutes later, he sat across from me in a booth.

I had determined in advance to under no circumstances be disapproving, so it was only to myself that I said: "Adam, where are your glasses? You can't see without them." I did not
By Michael Dorris

Previews

mention the fact that he had not shaved or washed his face in some time. I did not criticize his choice of clothing: a torn T-shirt in frigid November, a shabby pair of sweatpants; obviously worn without underwear, the ravaged running shoes I had begged him to discard weeks before. The nails on his fingers were long and jagged, his teeth not clean, his hair unbrushed. There was a spot of fresh blood on his lower lip, the result of his tendency toward chapped skin in winter dryness. All through public school, from October through March, I would apply balm to his lips as my last act before he left the house. Today I controlled my urge to remind him. Rather, I asked about his recent injury, a burn he had sustained on his forearm when he had stumbled into a hot stove. No one, least of all Adam, seemed sure how this accident had happened, but it was probable that on one of the many days that he had neglected to take his midday medicine or skipped his lunch—he had suffered a minor seizure. It would not have been a full-blown attack, but those had occurred as well. In just a few months on the job, Adam had been sent in an ambulance to the emergency room at Mary Hitchcock Memorial Hospital on three separate occasions after collapsing. He had banged his head on the floor, bruised his leg, bloodied his nose, and each time it was later discovered that the convulsions had been released because the medication level in his bloodstream was too low. When responsible for his own care, Adam sometimes became confused about his dosage, "forgetting" he had taken his Dilantin. 48 \$11e MBLR 1989

Where was the line between acceptance of a condition I could never change and despair or, worse, indifference? tin or Tegretol but warping the time frame. After seventeen years of instruction he still mixed up breakfast and lunch, lunch and dinner, the hours intervening from one meal to the other evaporating in his memory. Or, conversely, the minutes seemed to him to multiply between the event of swallowing a pill and the event of sitting at the table: at those times he overdosed and became drowsy, lethargic. Every now and then, I was convinced, his failure to take his medicine was, to the extent Adam was capable of it, intentional—a non-act rising out of anger at this need, at routine, at infirmity. He got mad at the pills and spurned them, only to pay dearly later for his defiance. Now he held up his arm for me to examine. A long red scar shaped like the blade of a sword extended from his wrist to his elbow. The doctor on the case had complained to

me that Adam had not kept the bandages clean, had removed them often to examine the wound, and that as a consequence the healing process had been neither quick nor ideal. There would be more of a lasting disfigurement than there had to be.

But I didn't bring this up. Tilt looks much better? I said.

Our conversation, between my nearly twenty-one-year-old son and I, consisted, as usual, of me asking questions and him answering.

Will-Iowls work going?"

IlGoodfl

I gestured to the wooden lanes visible through the interior windows. lll-Iave you been bowling since you've worked here?"

"Not yet."

"What did you have for dinner last night?"

"A TV dinner."

AAWhat kind?"

He paused in thought. searched his memory. "I can't say. Probably it was macaroni or turkey."

All this time he worked his way through the food he had brought like a beaver devouring a tree trunk.

"What's work been like today?"

This was a question he was equipped to handle, and he started at the beginning of the morning when he boarded the bus. He got off the bus at the bus stop. He came into the Red Rooster through the front door. He hung up his jacket on the hook. He swept the floor with the broom. He stacked dishes from the dishwasher. He got his jacket and zipped it up. He went outside. He picked trash off the parking lot. A milk carton. A piece of newspaper. Two pop cans. Something else he couldn't remember. He came back inside. He took off his jacket and hung it on the hook.

I listened as Adam recounted, like a videocassette playback, the blow-by-blow of his day. The hours existed for him as a series of unrelated acts, connected neither by analysis nor by critical perspective, uncolored by like or dislike, undistinguished by incident.

As I nodded, encouraging him to continue, I yearned to put words in his mouth, to break through the barrier of his plodding progress, to find in him some spark of sarcasm or wit. iiSo, Adam? I wanted to say. ilWho are you going to vote for in the presidential election? What do you think of the new Soviet foreign policy? I just read this great mystery novel-you've got to try it."

This was my problem, not his. Where was the fine line between acceptance of a condition I could never change and despair or, worse, indifference? When did I stop wanting, selfishly demanding, feeling that Adam had been cheated? When did I let go, quell my passion to power his life, direct his inter-

ests, think his thoughts? I was not proud of my complaints: they had long since ceased to do Adam much good and in fact interfered with the rhythm of the father-son relationship that he would probably prefer. I tried to imagine this lunch through his perspective, and everything was perfectly satisfactory, better even than satisfactory: Dad had said he could come, and Dad came. No problem. No anxiety that the instructions had been remembered wrong. Adam had not forgotten his lunch. He had brought his medicine and taken it. He had not been criticized. He was on turf with which he was familiar, at ease. He had not made a mistake. There were no questions he had to struggle to answer. The disruption of his familiar pattern was not confusing, and the test of the day would proceed on schedule, no surprises.

I had no doubt that Adam was glad to see me, that my presence alone was for him a good thing. On an emotional level, he required no more of me than my tacit approval. He liked having the category IIDadII in his life_characters on TV had Dads, and so did he. He liked having a person with whom he shared enough history to make some small talk. I confirmed his world, and thats all he wanted. The desire for more came only from me.

Excerpted from The Broken Cord (Q 1989
by Michael Dorris, published by Harper (T
Row.

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TELEVISION
Dark Content: Getting
South Africa News
hatls happening in South Africa?
If minutes of network news airtime are any indica-
tion, not much. The number of stories about South
Africa declined by two-thirds in the year after its gov-
ernment slapped on a wide-ranging press ban. But
whether the current paucity of network coverage is
actually due to the ban or to self-censorship-if CBS,
NBC, and ABC defy the decree, they could be frozen
out of all stories-is open to debate.
The networks may have knuckled under, but there is
a show that's risen to take their place: 50sz Africa Now
(SAN), a weekly newsmagazine that chronicles the con-
tinuing struggle for racial equality. Until recently, SA N has
been broadcast in only a limited number of cities, but start-
ing in August it became available to 317 public television
stations nationwide. Among the cities now receiving the
show are New York, San Francisco, Philadelphia, Los An-
geles, Boston, and Chicago.
Produced by Manhattan-based Globalyision, Incu SAN
first aired in April 1988. Its stoek-in-trade: the kind of in-
depth reporting rarely found on US. television. The show
divides its thirty minutes among spot news from the week
just past, a detailed background report on an issue of
Photograph by David Tumley/ Black Star
current signihcance, and a cultural piece. Recent segments
addressed the phenomenon of blaek-on-black violence, the
detention and torture of black Children, and the lack of
medical care for blacks under apartheid.
In a way, says Globalyision president Rory OlConnor,
SAN is a treal traditional news magazine.,, Unlike 60 Min-
utes, however, the show is produced on a shoestring budget
--about \$25,000 :1 week-gleaned from grants, viewer d0-
nations, and production services donated by two public
television stations. By contrast, the networks spend up to
\$500,000 to produce an hour-long newsmagazine.
Globalyisions limited resources can work in its favor.
llWe don't have a bureau in johannesburg that can be shut
downf. says OlConnor. Which doesnlt mean SAN has
gone unnoticed there. Several months ago, it reported alle-
gations that South African sol-
diers had shot, execution style,
some two dozen Namibian in-
surgents and dumped their
bodies in a mass grave. A story
ignored by the networks, its
coverage by SAN was de-
nounced in the South African
parliament by Defense Minister
Magnus Malan.
(TConimr is always asked whether SAle footage,
which comes from an assortment of stringers, independent
news crews and film agencies, is smuggled out of the coun-
try. But, he says, since the government is clearly aware of
the program, thats the wrong question. llThe real question
is, is there the will on the part of anyone else to use material
like this, which is readily available," he says. llOur answer
to that is, were doing it." -Erz'lz Hedegaard
spreads the word
Rez'. Allan Bocsak 5/))z'eld5 an accused polite spy from an angry mob (above).
With small budgets
and big stories, SAN
on J ohannesburg.

MOVIES

Of N ice Girls and Cold Showers

asturlmtion, lesbianism, and the importance of good that that wasn't the only story? Instead, the director says grooming are just some of the subjects addressed in he was struck by how llsincere and honest, many of the

Heavy Petting a documentary exploring American at- classic educational films were. llThey were much more

titudes about sex, love, and dating that opens this human than the sex films made today, which are very

month. (Lonstruetetl as a croteh-level equivalent to the clinical?

autiuuke Atomic (Itz/e (the concept comes from that There is, in fact, something poignant ly innocent about a

movie's eodireetor), Heavy Petting brings together ed- Hlm clip from the 1951 What to Do on a Date, which

ueational movies from the forties and fifties, Classic earnestly offers the ehiceofa , Hollywood clips, plus testimonials from the likes of stweenie roast or taffy pullfl Heavy Petting SHOW

Allen Ginsberg and Sandra Bernhard, reminiscing Or Dating: Do's and Don'ts, .

about their first forays udown there? with its three basic alternatives an age of Innocen c

ttThis isn't the story of actually having sex? qualifies for llhow to say good-nightll: .

director ()bie Benz. "Its the story of getting there through walk away, grab the girl, or handng Its first

adolescence, and all the images that are associated with it? chat until you get invited b ack

Tbatsn't quite the moviethat Benz set out to make. lch for a sandwich. just as often, fo rays "down there.

originally wanted to make a comedy about antisex propa- though, the films are rigidly ganda based on the archival educational footagefl he judgmental, with titles such as How to Say NO.

explains. llBut in looking through the footage we found As goofy as these films may seem now, theres no denying

their serious intent. Hundreds were churned out in the late forties through the fifties as mass pro- paganda. Shown in schools and even on early

TV, they attempted to reinstate "family valuesll after the turmoil of World War ll. Heavy Petting unearths such cultural signposts as Perversion for Profit, which addresses the dire consequences of allowing children to be ttstimulatedll by nude photographs, and Dance Little Children, in

which a "Field representative" searches 3 ball- park to find a potential source of syphilis. His focus: a tall. aggressive blonde. The latter film reminds us of the controversy over contact trac- ing, again an issue in the age of AIDS.

The acting in these films is similar to that found in third-rate Italian horror flicks, but Benz explains that the primitivism was wholly inten- tional. uThe people who made these films wanted to use kids who weren't too good-look- ing or talented so that the viewer could relate to them. In a way, these films were the last gasp to try and fight off the glamorous images of Holly- wood and more accurately portray the social in- security that everybody goes through."

As a result, Benz believes his movie has as much to say to kids today as it does to people who grew up watching the original educational films. HKids still have a lot to learn about sex and identityf he says.

Unfortunately, it's doubtful anyone will learn much from the celebrity "witnessesll here, unless you're genuinely interested in hearing David Byrne on French kissing or Abbie Hoffman On the llgreat circle jerk of 195 1." But in the archival footage the film soars. Through these clips we can see America struggling to forge an entire be- lief system-one so successful it still inspires

movies like Heavy Petting to struggle against it.
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CONFESSIONS

(Continued from page 24) ttThatts about
the first honest thing youlve told us in about
an hour. . . fl

2l havenlt been lying to you. . . . Ilm think-
ing I had a blackout. Now I never heard of a
blackout when you havenlt been drinking?

Then Dean said that Sawyer must sort
out the ftpicturesl, in his mind of what hap-
pened from his ttthoughtsll of what hap-
pened-and trust the pictures, even if they
didnlt appear in sequence.

ttYou sure did describe Saturday night to
us in the third person? Dean went on.

IIHim. Him. Him. When it was really you,
you, you . . . Talk to me. What do you re-
member? What can you see? . . . ,t

ItYou got me almost convinced I did, but I
donlt know?

Fire, who was bone tired, responded rev-
erentially. ttThank God. Thank God. Thank
God we almost have you convincedfl

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wrists in therePl Dean said.

llAnkles and wrists?

llThink about it now. . . . I can understand
if youlre embarrassed?

uTied them all together?

IIWith whatW

ftI-Ier bra?

llWhat did you tie together with her bra.W

Dean said.

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CONFESSIONS

(Continued from page 24) itThat is about the first honest thing you've told us in about an hour. . . fl

gI haven't been lying to you. . . . I'm thinking I had a blackout. Now I never heard of a blackout when you haven't been drinking?

Then Dean said that Sawyer must sort out the It pictures in his mind of what happened from his It thoughts of what happened-and trust the pictures, even if they didn't appear in sequence.

itYou sure did describe Saturday night to us in the third person? Dean went on.

ttHim. Him. Him. When it was really you, you, you . . . Talk to me. What do you remember? What can you see? . . . It

tIYou got me almost convinced I did, but I don't know?

Fire, who was bone tired, responded reverentially. tlThank God. Thank God. Thank God we almost have you convinced?

Then came the second thunderclap. Dean led Sawyer to believe that the hair samples he had given the police checked out with the samples taken from Staschak's body. This was a lie; it would end up taking months to get the hair assays back from the FBI lab in Washington.

But when Tom Sawyer heard about this ttevidence f he crumpled. ttI still can't believe I did it. I guess all the proofs in? Dean did not waste any time running him through the scenario point by point. Sawyer responded by mimicking John Dean's behaviorist jargon.

itIt seems like I get a picture of it. . . . But I still say to myself, No, you didn't do it? . . . It just isn't coming. I'm blocking it or something f Sawyer opined.

iIt's opening f, Dean said coolly. itThe door's opening. It's just a crack?

Soon Sawyer was all the way in. ttI kind of see myself at her front door. . . 3i

tiLet the pictures roll and let's hear the story f Dean said.

IIOne, two, three, go? Fire coached, as he and Dean pushed Sawyer to tremember tl going into Staschak's apartment. Sawyer responded with flashes of memory before delivering what the detectives really wanted. the hitting her with something? Sawyer said, as the cops prodded him on. ttHer falling on the couch . . . I get a picture of me standing over her naked?

The problem with the scenario was that it was too simplistic and fuzzy. Just about all the details could have come from public sources. The cops needed to confirm the specifics. It was here that the priestly Fire played his most significant part. During a break that probably occurred past 2 A.M., Fire and Sawyer agreed in the hallway that Sawyer ought to tell the It truth? The tt truth il was a set of facts different from both the tt thoughts ll Tom retained of Saturday night -in which he went to sleep at eleven-and the lt pictures il he had of what took place in Staschak's apartment. Fire and Sawyer worked out the tt truth f which included an anal rape. The hallway meeting was not re-

corded, but from later references in the interrogation it seems clear that the tltruthil was a set of tlfactsh that would allow Sawyer to avoid a first-degree murder conviction. Sawyerls attorney says these facts came from Fire. Fire denies it.

What is plain is that when Sawyer did not regurgitate the correct facts-say, the kind of binding marks on Staschakls ankles-the cops steered him to them.

IlWhat did you do to her ankles and wrists in there? Dean said.

ItAnkles and wrists?

IIThink about it now. . . . I can understand if you,re embarrassed?

ttTied them all together?

IlWith what?

ttI-Ier bra.u

ththat did you tie together with her bra?

Dean said.

IIHer ankles and wrists?

uThat is all you used, was her braPII

IlThink hard, Tomi, Fire said.

But the cops moved on to other subjects-the whereabouts of Staschakk car, a missing pair of underpants-before coming back to the bindings. Sawyer tried some different answers, saying ttbeltfl then later, ttspeaker wire? The cops persisted: ttWhat was it, TomPI, Fire asked. ttTell the truth, Tom?

ItA jockPII

iiA what?

Hock?

IA jock? A jockstrap? Where did you use that?

IlHer ankles . . ft

lIThey don,t leave marks, Tom. Something elsef Fire said.

By then Sawyer was a zombie. He admitted whatever the cops wanted-most importantly, details that turned out to be erroneous, notably that Staschak had been sodomized.

After Sawyer was allowed a ninety-minute nap, he awoke to a new round of questioning. This time, though, he had a clear-headed moment. IlThe truth is, and this is gonna piss you off. . fl

Pete Fire surely heard in Sawyefs voice a new meaning for the word tttruthf a truth greater than any hallway agreement, and he yelled: tiTomlP,

IIThe truth is . . . the only reason Fm telling this stuff is because you got evidence to get me. I dontt believe I did it. Thatts why I Sexual

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MOTHER jONES 55

want to talk to somebody. 11m going fuckinl
bananas. . . 3'

uNow you're blowing our minds said
Sergeant Gerard McAuley, who had come in
to help clean things up.
nYou're blowing my mind, too?

THE DETECTIVES WERE so SATISFIED WITH,
the confession they'd obtained, they let the
rest of their investigation slide. The police
lost a key blood sample from the first floor of
Staschak's apartment and did not try to re-
cover more of the stain for over a year, at
which point it was too old to test. Then they
failed to refrigerate the only tissue sample
they had of Staschak. A prosecutor later told
the judge in the case that the unchilled sam-
ple had turned into 11chipped beef?
Chipped beef, indeed. What contempt
they had for the victim! Throughout the in-
terrogation there had been talk of Sawyer as
a ureal lowlife? and this seemed the mea-
sure of regard the detectives brought to
Janet Stasehaks life as well. Staschak's
friendships with gay men didn't fit their im-
age of her, so they did not consider the pos-
sibility that the two dissimilar earrings
found on the floor could have come from a
man. Nor did they follow up on the note
they found next to her phone that said
11Ronfi which might have referred to a man
who had lived in her apartment earlier that
year.

Then the cops got a bombshell. The evi-
dence they were counting on to clinch the
case-the blood samples found on
Staschak's sheet and the many hairs from
her body-came back from Washington;
they weren't Sawyers. Only one hair, found
in Staschak's kitchen, matched Sawyer's
pubic hair. But considering that the apart-
ments shared a concrete slab inches from
Staschak's kitchen and that sixteen police
officers had trooped in and out of her apart-
ment across this slab before the hair was
collected, this was a weak clue.

Meanwhile, Joseph Donahey and Sondra
Goldenfarb, Sawyers attorneys, moved to
suppress the confession, and at a six-week
hearing in the spring of 1988, the cops were
under fire. When John Dean took the stand,
Pinellas County Judge Gerard J. O'Brien, Jr.,
played 11amateur detective focusing on the
assumption that the marks on the nude body
pointed to a sex-starved young man. 11Isn't it
possible that a woman could have commit-
ted this murder? O'Brien asked.

Dean responded: uYour honor, in any in-
vestigation, when you start, you go with the
normal, the things you're accustomed to,
and then if you exhaust those things, you
start looking for the out-of-the-ordinary;
maybe it was a woman and maybe she was a
lesbian, etc, etc?

56 SEPTEMBER 1989

uYou made the assumption that you felt
there was something sexual about this
murder?

1"Okay, 11m going to-may I say, your
honor, that even though I thought there was
something sexual that either initiated or
took part in this homicide, I never for one

minute thought of that type of sex as the sex
I know. You know what I'm trying to say? I
I know?

Dean tried to rally. I never for one minute
thought there ever had to be penetration
for somebody to get off sexually?

Well, that's true. But this could open the
door to both sexes?

But of course the cops had only opened
one door, the closest one, the very next door.
During the hearing, the state argued that
Sawyer had manipulated the detectives, led
them on, pried out what they knew, then
salted his confession with statements he
knew to be false. He wasn't just sitting
there like a sack of something, unintelligent
Dean said, adding that Sawyer's
life of alcoholism had trained him in decep-
tion, that the sociology and psychology
courses he'd taken in college, along with all
the TV cop shows he watched, made him
sophisticated. It was a battle of wits be-
tween him and the cops, says Richard Rip-
plinger, the state's assistant attorney pros-
ecuting the case.

Judge O'Brien wasn't convinced: last
year he threw out the confession. The en-
forced sleeplessness, the use of the lie detec-
tor test, the leading questions, the prolonged
interrogation had all, as the US Supreme
Court put it in ruling on an appeal in a sim-
ilar case in 1987, sapped the suspects
powers of resistance and self-control . . .
overbore his will . . . and critically im-
paired his capacity for self-determination."
By the time the Clearwater Sun editorial-
ized about the police bungling in
July 1988, the shit hit the fan" inside the
Clearwater Police Department, Pete Fire
says. Fire was urged to retire, Dean trans-
ferred to street patrol, and McAuley moved
to personnel. But the state continued to in-
sist that it had found Staschak's killer, and
its appeal of Judge O'Brien's order is still
pending.

IN THE 1966 MIRANDA CASE, THE SUPREME
Court came face to face with the police con-
fessional and wrote one of the most liberal
decisions in its history. Chief Justice Earl
Warren was particularly upset by police
manuals that instructed cops in coercive
techniques, and in his decision he said warn-
ing a defendant of his or her rights under the
Constitution is an absolute prerequisite in
overcoming the inherent pressures of the in-
terrogation atmosphere? The Court ex-
plained that the Fifth Amendment right not
to incriminate oneself and the Sixth Amend-
ment right to counsel are not fighting rights
-not ones you have to stand up for in order
to claim.

Judge O'Brien ruled that there were Mi-
randa violations in Sawyer's case-notably,
that Sawyer's pleas for rest were ignored.
Just the same, his case demonstrates how
little the Supreme Court ruling has affected
the pressures of the interrogation room. The
manuals that upset Earl Warren are virtually
the same ones cops study today, still pro-
moting the techniques used on Sawyer.
This was an inadvertent brainwashing,

to break someone down and convince him he committed a murder of which he had not one memoryf says Richard Ofshe, a sociologist at the University of California who has studied cults. (Ofshe testified in Sawyerls behalf as an expert on lithought control9 and has begun building a library of similar police interrogations.)

But Pete Fire remains unrepentant; according to him, the methods were tried and true. llWeire not talking about somebody shoplifting or robbing a house. We,re talking about a human life being taken that canlt be replaced? he says. 9Youire not lying because youlre a liar. Youlre using every technique within the framework of the law?

A 1987 Stanford Law Review study of miscarriages of justice found that in this century, 49 of 350 cases in which innocent people were erroneously convicted of potential death-penalty crimes were due to coerced confessions. The Stanford study cited the Talmud in recommending that death sentences be barred in cases in which the conviction rested solely on a confession. When convictions were overturned, the authors said, it was most often the result of the defendants simple good fortune.

Tom Sawyerls great luck was that his parents were well-off people who never abandoned their son, who believed the loss of \$100,000 in savings was worth the price of saving him from prison or a death sentence. Of course, Sawyers other great stroke of luck was that Gerard McAuley turned on a tape recorder. Perhaps that McAuley did was the result of some sort of interdepartmental rivalry involving Pete Fire, who objected to the taping.

The Sawyer case has rallied support for the mandatory videotaping or audiotaping of police interrogations. The American Bar Associations criminal justice committee encourages testing the idea, and even Ed Meesels Justice Department backed it. Some criminal defense lawyers object that taping would give the prosecution the ability to doctor a confession. People like Tom Sawyer, though, would be helped by

such routine taping. 8My God, a recordings
a helluva lot better than having to deal with
the recitation of the copsf says Joe
Donahey, Sawyers lawyer.

I WENT LOOKING FOR TOM SAWYER ALL
over Clearwater late this spring. He had
spent fourteen months in jail and was now
out while his appeal is considered, but his
attorneys were trying to keep journalists
away from him. A year before, they had al-
lowed NBC News to do a segment with
Sawyer. But things were going Sawyers way
now, and his attorneys didn4t want any stray
comments to screw things up.

I found Sawyer at the Serenity Club. He
walked in wearing an immaculate red polo
shirt and blue shorts, and when I went up to
him he said I should meet him outside after
the testimonials. It was a warm night; we
stood on the sidewalk talking, then went
back in and sat at a table until the place
closed. My strongest impression of him was
how terribly innocent and pliable he was
despite the brawny look. Sawyer lacked all
confidence: you could see it when other men
came near us and he put on an act of male
camaraderie, flashing a smile and making
forced efforts at banter. But if his manner
was boyish, well, held spent seventeen years
in a bottle. Alcoholism shadowed him. The
most assertive point he made was that I
shouldn't mention the Serenity Club, be-
cause anonymity is essential to the treatment
program-though the club had already been
identified in many newspaper articles.

Tom Sawyer had told me right from the
start that he wasn't supposed to talk, but I
needed him for this story, and this was my
only chance to speak with him. I persisted
and he c0uldn4t say no. In the end he clung to
me, wanting to hear more questions. He was
flattered to be in what one of the defense
witnesses had called a 0prestigious8 situa-
tion-talking to a cop, a reporter, any per-
son with some sort of authority. We ended
up spending an hour together, Sawyer fin-
gering his turquoise ring, smoking Marl-
boros, nervous but with his head tilted for-
ward eagerly.

In no time, in other words, I began to feel
like the detectives. I could have asked Tom
Sawyer anything and gotten a response. His
will to please was stronger than his will to
protect himself, which seemed almost negli-
gible. So I couldn't bring myself to take
notes or even quote him. I'd read too many
of his quotes already.

Philip Weiss is a free-lance writer from New
York. Research for "Untrue Confessions",
was underwritten by the Mother Jones In-
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MOTHER jONliS 59

REMEMBER WHEN I FIRST HEARD THE WORD IILESBOSd, IT was in the fourth grade. Our two most popular girls, Andrea and Barbara, were taking turns sitting on each other and laughing under the upper field staircase at lunch. Me and my friend Gloria Iguchi leaned our heads under and said, "What are you guys doing? They said, tIWelre lesbos." After that, me and Gloria said we were also lesbos, and by third recess, it had spread to all the girls. Any girl who coulant find someone to be lesbos with was out. It was the new main thing of my whole class.

When our teacher found out, I remember how she sent all the boys to Mr. Leclair's room and then pulled down the shades. I thought she was going to show us a filmstrip, but instead Mrs. Hallagan, the school nurse, came in. She told us she had a serious subject to talk about. Then she asked us if we understood the word we were using. uWho can tell me what it means? No one raised their hand. She told us that lesbian was not a joke. lLesbian is when a girl wants to marry another girl? I remember thinking, what's so big about that? Every girl I knew wanted to marry her best friend. Then she told us it was a hateful idea to God. lGod can forgive you for using a word when you don't know what it means, but after that, girls she said, lI-Ie just forgets about you? I remember how some of the girls started crying and how our teacher thanked her, then told us to put our heads down and think about Mrs. Hallagan's message.

It wasn't until the sixth grade that I found out why a lesbo is perverted. It's the girl-opposite of a boy queer.

I was remembering this story because of Vicky Talluso, my best friend who can't sleep over anymore, ever since my mom opened the door to my room and caught Vicky showing me the special way Hector Hernandez does his arms when he slow dances, how he holds one of your hands behind your back and breathes air on your ear in a romantic Mexican way. The song lth, Darlingll came on the radio and Vicky put her arms around me, showing me the way Hector tries to feel your boobs by holding you tighter and tighter and she was going lI Oh my darling senorita all in my ear just as a joke and then I hear the doorknob turn and my mom yells my name the way someone yells when you're about to get hit by a car. llWhat? I say. lCome downstairs! she tells me.

In the kitchen my mom whisper-shouts at me to tell her what in the hell was going on up there. llCan you give me one good reason for you and that Talluso dancing like that?" There was no way I could tell her about the Hector Hernandez Mexican boob feel.

"Mom?

llDon't mom me. It's not right, things could happen! lI like what? llT/aingsf' lI Mom? I say, but she tells me to get upstairs and tell Vicky it's time to go home.

lI Great! Vicky says. lI Now your mom thinks we're lesbos! lThat is not what she thinks," I say. llShe has a migraine? It's not that I want to stick up for my mother. I just don't want to get known as someone whose mom thinks her friends are lesbians.

lth, sure? Vicky says. lth, come off it?

When I walk Vicky to the door, my mom and her say good-bye so normally that for a second I thought I had imagined the whole thing.

After the door shuts, my mother says for me to sit down on the couch. I watched her smoking with her arms crossed and deciding that I was too old to have friends overnight anymore. I didn't say anything because a lot of times with my mom, it's

just a case of her being in a mood. If you fight with her about it, it only helps the new rule to stick in her mind. That night I had a dream where I was with Hector Hernandez and he asked me if I wanted to see his coffeepot and his hair kept getting longer and he was wearing a nightgown and then he turned into Jesus. He was kissing me and feeling my boobs and I was getting so excited but I was trying not to because I knew it was wrong to get excited by Jesus. He kept pressing down on me until I noticed he had giant boobs and smelled like Luvls Fresh Lemon Scent and then I looked and his face was suddenly Vicky. I opened my eyes and freaked out. I wondered which was I going to go to hell for most, Jesus or Vicky Talluso? I also had to wonder, was I secretly a lesbian? Dreams don't come by themselves. Anyone who has taken Health knows they are psychological. The next day at school I kept noticing my eyes going out of control and landing on girls, boobs. When I was Changing in gym Vicky and this other girl Joan were right by me and I was so scared about my eyes that I couldn't even look at them. IIYou're sure being a snob today,u Vicky said. Then she says, "Can you get this for mePII and what it was, was her earring wouldn't go through. uLet Joan do itf' I say. uThanks a lot Vicky says. III don't get you today. Are you mad at me about that thing with your mom?'3 h Joan says, lIWhat thing with your momPIl and I feel my face get ot. llOkay, okay. I-Iere. Illl do itf I say. IIGive it? She hands me the earring. IISheIs the only one who can do this earf' Vicky says, and when I lean over I can smell her Luvls Fresh Lemon Scent. III-Iey! OUCI-I! What are you trying to do, kill me? .wu, V-ntt

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