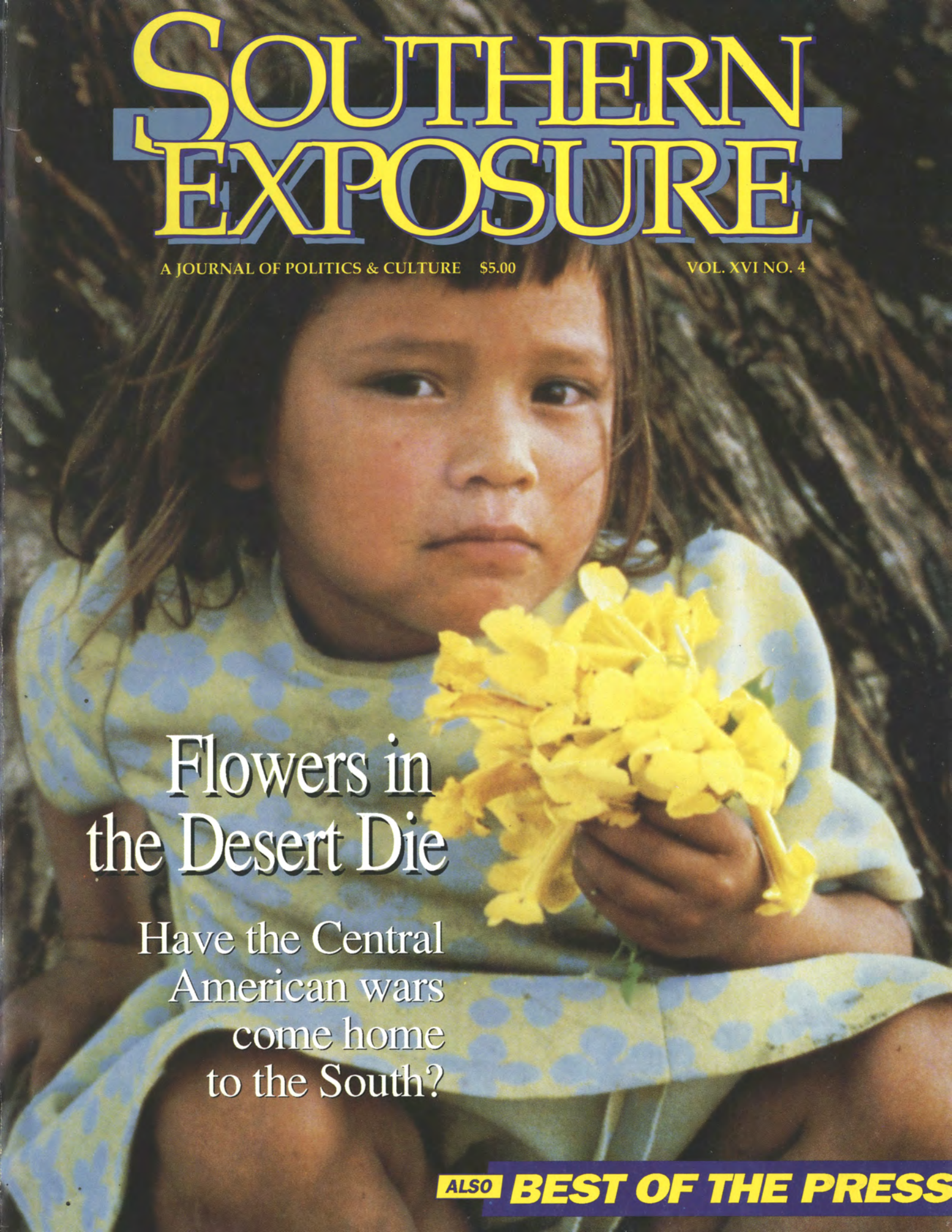


# SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

A JOURNAL OF POLITICS & CULTURE \$5.00

VOL. XVI NO. 4



## Flowers in the Desert Die

Have the Central  
American wars  
come home  
to the South?

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**BEST OF THE PRESS**

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# DATELINE: THE SOUTH

**MIAMI, Fla.** (Sept. 10) — Ex-Marine Oliver North, under a 13-count indictment for his role in the Iran-contra scandal, received a hero's welcome here during an all-day visit to raise money for his legal defense. Admirers compared North to Presidents Lincoln and Washington, while peace activists carried signs reading, "Real Heros Don't Sell Arms to Terrorists."

**GALLATIN, Tenn.** (Sept. 15) — Most of the mules being used to carry supplies for Islamic fundamentalists fighting in the mountains of Afghanistan are being shipped by Hub Reese, a third-generation Tennessee mule breeder in this small town. The mules are trucked to Ft. Campbell and flown to Afghanistan courtesy of the U.S. government.



**FORT WORTH, Texas** (Sept. 19) — Donald Gene Burleson became the first person in the country convicted of using a "virus" to sabotage computer records. He was found guilty of using a rogue computer program to wipe out the payroll records of an insurance company that had fired him. Officials say they have documented about 250,000 cases of sabotage by computer viruses nationwide.

**SHREVEPORT, La.** (Sept. 20) — Hundreds of black residents burned stores and rioted after a white woman fatally shot a black man. It was the second time in six weeks a white killed a black in this town of 250,000. "We've got problems in our economy," said Mayor John Hussey. "We've got problems in our racism."

**MIAMI, Fla.** (Sept. 21) — The Burger King fast food chain refused to

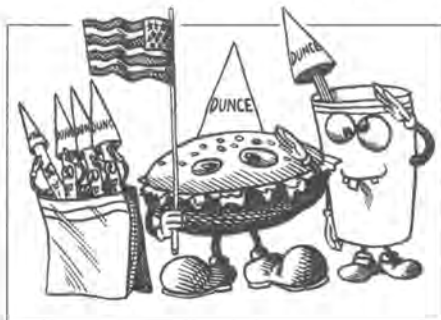
admit it flunked history after it printed factual errors on millions of tray liners intended to honor America's teachers. The liners incorrectly stated that Thomas Jefferson wrote the Constitution; in fact, he did not even sign the document. When asked about the mistake, Burger King official Susan Molina said, "Why is that important?" The tray liners were part of an ad campaign entitled "Education Enriches Everyone."

**TAMPA, Fla.** (Sept. 29) — A school district that barred three brothers exposed to the AIDS virus from elementary school for two years agreed to pay parents Louise and Clifford Ray more than \$1.1 million in damages. Attorneys said the case is the first time a person exposed to AIDS has won damages for civil rights violations.

**EL PASO, Texas** (Sept. 30) — A federal judge ruled today that the agency responsible for enforcing the nation's civil rights laws discriminates against Hispanics. The judge said the FBI is slow to promote Hispanic agents and assigns them to temporary translating jobs on what is known as the "taco circuit."

**ORLANDO, Fla.** (Oct. 6) — Nora Roth, a student who failed an economics test twice but maintained good grades, is suing the University of Central Florida to either receive a master's degree in business or get her \$5,000 tuition back. "After paying all my dues and having a good average, I just feel abused," Roth said. "I really don't want their money. I just want what I earned."

**NITRO, W. Va.** (Oct. 9) — More than 3,000 residents evacuated their homes today while a hazardous waste crew blew up a corroded tank suspected



**HATTIESBURG, Miss.** (Oct. 16) — Less than 24 years after the government exploded the first of two H-bombs underground in rural Lamar County, federal officials have found a radioactive isotope in soil surrounding the test site. Officials said there appears to be no danger of contamination — so long as residents remain more than one mile from the site.

to contain 30 pounds of hydrogen cyanide gas, one of the deadliest poisons made. As little as 50 milligrams of the substance — one-sixth the size of an aspirin — can kill an adult.

**FRANKFORT, Ky.** (Oct. 11) — State officials announced that they are considering selling \$100 million worth of bonds in Japan to take advantage of lower interest rates there. If implemented, the project would make Kentucky the first state to raise money by issuing debt in Japan. Officials said the foreign debt is needed to help pay for tax breaks and other "incentives" used to attract some of the three dozen Japanese firms currently doing business in Kentucky.

**TAMPA, Fla.** (Oct. 11) — BCCI Holdings, a global banking institution with branches in 72 countries, was indicted today for allegedly laundering money for Colombian drug dealers. Federal agents described it as the first drug-laundering case involving an entire international financial institution and its officers.

**SHELBY, N.C.** (Oct. 14) — Merchants here kicked off their second annual Livermush Expo today to honor the pork and commel delicacy produced in the town. The theme of the weekend long festival: "Everything — Including the Squeal."

**DEKALB COUNTY, Ga.** (Oct. 16)— White churchgoers interrupted Sunday service at Victory Temple today when four blacks joined the all-white Pentecostal church. The next day whites changed the locks on the church door and barred the Reverend Doyle Burrell from the pulpit for accepting blacks as members.

**NEW ORLEANS, La.** (Oct. 17)— A federal court ruled today that U.S. companies operating abroad can violate civil rights laws and discriminate against their employees. The court upheld a ruling against Ali Bourelslan, a U.S. citizen who said he was fired from his job with Aramco in Saudi Arabia after his supervisor harassed him in "a campaign which took the form of racial, religious, and ethnic slurs."

**ZIP CITY, Ala.** (Oct. 17)— Local residents in this town of 600 families started a trash recycling program after the world's largest toxic waste company announced plans to dump 600,000 tons of garbage from Tennessee, Alabama, and Mississippi in a nearby landfill. Waste Management Inc. said the dump is safe, but residents say recycling can eliminate the need for the landfill.

**MEMPHIS, Tenn.** (Oct. 18)— Members of the environmental group Greenpeace took samples at one of the city's two sewage treatment plants to check for toxic industrial wastes being dumped in the Mississippi River. The anti-pollution activists also put up warning signs after they discovered a man fishing in an unmarked, contaminated area at the mouth of the Wolf River.

**WINNIE, Texas** (Oct. 20)— The East Chambers Consolidated School District became the third in the state to order students to submit to drug testing before they can participate in sports and

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** (Nov. 14)— One week after Election Day and a week before Thanksgiving, the Farmers Home Administration sent out notices threatening 83,430 delinquent borrowers with foreclosure. Nearly 36,000 of the farmers live in the South, and almost a fourth are from four states — Texas, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Georgia.

other extracurricular activities. The ACLU said it will sue on behalf of any students who feel the mandatory tests violate their Fourth Amendment guarantee against illegal search and seizure.

**MONTGOMERY, Ala.** (Oct. 21)— A federal judge blocked the shipment of 47,000 tons of PCB-contaminated soil from Texas to an Alabama landfill, saying the Environmental Protection Agency violated its own rules by failing to properly notify Alabama officials of the transfer.

**CLEVELAND, Miss.** (Oct. 22)— A federal judge awarded \$3 million to 766 blacks and women, saying the state employment services office discriminated against them in job placement. Some of the plaintiffs in the 1972 lawsuit will receive \$40,000.

**NORFOLK, Va.** (Oct. 27)— The state NAACP is asking public officials to give up their memberships in the all-white Princess Anne Country Club and the Norfolk Yacht and Country Club, citing a Supreme Court ruling that all-male clubs in New York must open their doors to women. Neither club accepts blacks or Jews, but officials deny that they discriminate. "We have a private club and we want to keep it that way," said Princess Anne board member Barry R. Koch.

**MISENHEIMER, N.C.** (Oct. 29)— Officials at Pfeiffer College said they

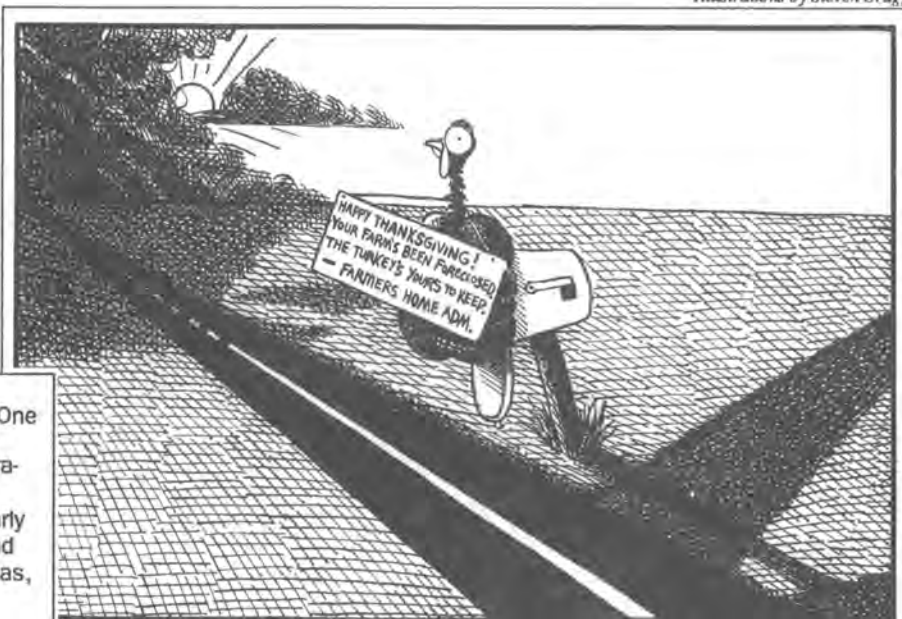
have turned down an offer from a Japanese university seeking to buy a private college in the South. "They wanted to control us lock, stock, and barrel," one official said, "and we are not interested in that arrangement." The unnamed university is reportedly ready to invest \$30 million in a Southern college over the next 10 years to educate Japanese students looking for U.S. jobs.

**ROME, Ga.** (Nov. 9)— East Rome High School banned books on witchcraft from the school library and told students they need parental approval to check out other books — like *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker — deemed "controversial." School board member Sandra Jones called the censorship "dangerous and horrifying."

**CHARLESTON, S.C.** (Nov. 10)— U.S. Bankruptcy Judge Rufus Reynolds ordered Jim and Tammy Bakker and a former top aide to repay \$7.7 million they took from the PTL ministry. The judge quoted the Bible, saying Bakker had apparently overlooked I Timothy 6:10 — "For the love of money is the root of all evil; which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."

*Readers are encouraged to submit news items to Dateline. Please send original clippings or photocopies and give name and date of publication.*

*Illustrations by Steven Cragg*



## THOUSANDS MARCH, DEMAND "CANCER ALLEY" CLEANUP

The songs rang in familiar waves over a sea of black and white faces thronging the Mississippi River. Stopping nightly to pray and testify at black churches clutching the levy, marching and stumping by day through towns like St. Gabriel, Burnside, and Paulina, hundreds of marchers strode from Baton Rouge to New Orleans in the South's newest fight for justice — freedom from toxic poisoning.

"This was not your typical environmental march," said Pat Bryant, executive director of the Great Louisiana Toxics March. "People who were poor and people who were not so poor participated. And the myth that black people are not interested in protecting the earth, the environment, was proven erroneous."

Five sponsoring organizations and hundreds of other co-sponsors organized the March, a 100-mile exodus from November 11 to 20, to draw national attention to the poisoning of the South. More than 130 chemical production plants, toxic waste dumps, Superfund sites, and incinerators disgorge millions of pounds of toxic waste annually into Louisiana's rivers, soil, and air. In 1986, a joint study by the Sierra Club, the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Union, and four local toxics groups revealed that a cluster of 18 chemical plants surrounding Geismar, Louisiana pumped 196 million pounds of chemical pollutants into the air during a single year.

"Statewide, that's almost a billion pounds," said Darryl Malek-Wiley, organizer of the march. "And they wonder why we have such a high cancer rate in Louisiana."

Up to 5,000 people poured off porches or arrived by bus to march and sing during the 10-day event. Participants pushed past corporate plants and dumps representing dozens of household product names: Union Carbide, BASF, Ciba-Geigy, Dow, Borden Chemical, Vulcan, and Shell Oil.

"These chemical companies have

devastated the social fabric of Louisiana, especially minority communities," said Malek-Wiley.

Somber candlelight lit the houses of one abandoned black community. Revielletown, its two streets quiet and empty, had been so saturated from leaks of polyvinyl chloride wastes from the nearby Georgia Gulf Corporation that the company bought the town and forced its families out rather than clean it up.

Louisiana is the nation's third largest producer of chemical materials; battles to stop the poisoning will be lengthy and hardfought. Still, March organizers say they are hopeful. "The March awakened and excited those communities," Bryant said. Training new, largely minority leaders brought out by the march will set the stage for future progress on environmental, labor, and human justice issues, he added.

—Chris Nichols

## D.O.E. COVERED UP NUCLEAR DANGERS

The Department of Energy admitted that it has been covering up serious accidents at the Savannah River nuclear plant in South Carolina for nearly 30 years, sparking reports of government mismanagement, chronic safety violations, and environmental contamination throughout the commercial nuclear weapons industry.

The accidents included extensive radioactive contamination, dangerous power surges, fires, melted fuel, and a 2,100-gallon leak of reactor cooling water. Nuclear experts said at least three of the mishaps could have led to a complete meltdown of the reactor core.

The accidents were made public in October during a joint congressional investigation. The plant was shut down last August after federal inspectors discovered that operators neither understood nor cared about an unsettling power surge similar to the one that destroyed the Chernobyl nuclear reactor in the Soviet Union in 1986.

Dr. H. Jack Geiger, former president of Physicians for Social Responsibility, called Savannah River and other weapons plants "a kind of creeping Chernobyl that is happening not in one place but at many sites,

slowly and steadily affecting the health and lives of millions of workers and residents." Geiger and other nuclear experts have called for the creation of an independent commission to study health dangers at nuclear weapons factories.

Only one week after the Savannah River disclosures, the DOE also admitted that it has known for decades that it has been releasing thousands of tons of radioactive waste into the water and air around the uranium enrichment plant in Fernald, Ohio, exposing thousands of workers and residents to high doses of radioactivity.

Three nuclear weapons facilities have been shut down in the last three months, and the DOE now says it could be at least a year before it allows Savannah River to restart. Yet the shutdown isn't the only safety problem facing the sprawling weapons complex. Savannah River has generated tons of deadly waste over the years, and the DOE estimates that even a partial cleanup will cost \$1.7 billion.

Estimates of cleanup costs at the 15 weapons production sites nationwide run as high as \$175 billion — and experience suggests that even that figure may turn out to be severely underestimated.

Despite the public disclosures of lying, mismanagement, and serious health risks in the industry, the federal government is proceeding with plans to build a new nuclear weapons reactor. The leading contender for the project is — Savannah River.

The new reactor, estimated to cost \$20 billion over the next 50 years, has the strong support of South Carolina Senator Strom Thurmond, ranking member of the Senate Armed Services Committee. Thurmond happens to live in the town of Aiken, right next door to the 300-square-mile weapons factory.

Some have suggested that the DOE's sudden candor about safety hazards at Savannah River and other weapons facilities is a ploy to generate political support for a new reactor. Du Pont, rankled by DOE criticism of its operation of Savannah River, claims the government is exaggerating safety violations to get tax money to build a new reactor.

"The company is a victim of lynch-mob psychology," said Irving Shapiro, former Du Pont chairman.

## PROTESTERS BLOCK CLINICS ACROSS SOUTH

Thousands of protesters across the South have attempted to block health clinics and harass women who chose to have abortions, prompting mass arrests in dozens of cities and marking one of the biggest waves of civil disobedience since the civil rights and anti-war movements of the 1960s.

The demonstrations began in Atlanta on July 19, when a New York-based group calling itself Operation Rescue tried to prevent women from entering clinics during the Democratic National Convention. Protesters shouted at patients entering the clinics, pushed past police barricades, and refused to give their names when arrested in an effort to clog Atlanta jails.

The protests continued for months and spread to Florida, North Carolina, Virginia, Mississippi, Texas, and Louisiana. In all, an estimated 7,000 demonstrators have been arrested nationwide, including 1,200 in Atlanta.

Demonstrations across the region, including those in 32 cities held on a "National Day of Rescue" on October 29, have been marked by efforts to intimidate patients. Protesters videotaped women entering the clinics and shouted religious remarks at them.

"Save your child! Give your life to Jesus!" one demonstrator yelled at a

woman entering a clinic in suburban New Orleans.

The clinics and other groups that support women's legal right to make their own medical decisions responded quickly to the demonstrations. In Atlanta, more than 300 people — ranging from students to lawyers to homemakers — immediately volunteered to escort patients into clinics. Some worked as escorts five days a week, taking vacation days from their regular jobs to help out.

"The community response has been unbelievable," said Sally Tyler, executive director of the Georgia Abortion Rights Action League. "There are literally 50 calls a day from people wanting to escort."

Many volunteers and patients have expressed anger at the protesters. "It just ticks me off that they are out there," one woman waiting to have an abortion told the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*. "I think they are a bunch of nosy busybodies with nothing else to do."

Although the protesters claim they are nonviolent, many have tried to physically prevent women from entering the clinics, and some have been charged with assault.

Leaders of Operation Rescue have been eager to compare their protests with the civil rights struggle, but Freedom Movement veterans like Julian Bond and John Lewis have noted that the goals differ drastically. Civil rights advocates demonstrated at courthouses, bus sta-

tions, and other public facilities to demand that the Constitution be enforced; Operation Rescue trespasses at private clinics to deny women their constitutional right to terminate unwanted pregnancies.

Whatever comparisons are made between Operation Rescue and the civil rights movement, the abortion protests serve to remind activists that the tactics of civil disobedience employed in the 1960s continue to work in the 1980s. By staging repeated sit-ins and challenging police to arrest them, a relatively small number of protesters have once again attracted substantial media attention and shifted the terms of public debate.

## REPUBLICANS PUSH "HOT BUTTON" ISSUES

George Bush's victory in November was a vote for the status quo, a referendum on the Reagan image of peace and prosperity, and an endorsement of a conservative trend begun 20 years ago. That trend, nurtured in the South, but now more national than regional, embraces a greater concern for crime than for civil rights, and a belief that big government is inherently meddlesome and obnoxious, useful only for keeping foreign enemies at bay.

It was a good year to be an incumbent. Lacking any clear reason to opt for change, voters installed Reagan's heir apparent and returned 99 percent of the U.S. representatives running for re-election to the Democratic-controlled House.

For half the adults in America, it was also a good year to ignore the whole thing. What has been billed as voter apathy might be better understood as voter antipathy. The South continued to post the lowest voter turnout in the nation, although the gap has been narrowing since 1968 (see box page 7).

As Bush's success indicates, the path to victory still demands a forceful presentation of values, laced with patriotic zeal and believable scapegoats. Although Michael Dukakis shunned such a strategy, Bush effectively focused on a series of "hot button" issues that exit polls say played especially well in the South — issues like the furlough of murderer Willie Horton, the ACLU, gun control, taxes, and the Pledge of Allegiance.

Bush's campaign manager, Lee Atwater of South Carolina, summed up the strategy before a conference of Republicans last summer: "There are five or



Photo by Vic Tuttle

REVELATIONS OF NEAR-MELTDOWNS AT THE SAVANNAH RIVER PLANT HAVE SHAKEN THE COMMERCIAL NUCLEAR WEAPONS INDUSTRY.

six gut, core issues, value issues. If we hammer on those issues, we're going to win."

Talking to a *Boston Globe* reporter the day after the election, the feisty Atwater offered this advice to Democrats: "The way to win a presidential race against the Republicans is to develop the class warfare issue, as Dukakis did at the end. To divide up the haves and have-nots and to try and reinvigorate the New Deal coalition, and to attack."

Progressives and even many Democratic Party leaders agreed. Dukakis "just ran a lousy campaign," said Robert Slagle, chair of the Texas Democratic Party. "There were 101 banks failed in Texas. Did you ever see a single ad in Texas talking about the instability of the financial situation from the Dukakis campaign? No. There wasn't one."

Among Southern whites, Dukakis received a pitiful 32 percent of the vote, compared with 41 percent of whites in the West and 45 percent in the East. By contrast, Democratic congressional candidates received 45 percent of the Southern white vote — enough, when combined with indispensable black support, to help the party gain two new seats in the House.

In the South, Dukakis carried only three of 18 demographic groups identified by a CBS-*New York Times* exit poll — union members, voters with incomes below \$12,500, and voters without a high school diploma. (The South was the only region where women voted for Bush.) Outside the region, Dukakis won majorities from seven of the demographic groups, including women and voters with advanced degrees.

Inside the South, Dukakis did best in West Virginia and Louisiana, the states with the highest unemployment rates. He carried university towns and heavily black cities like Atlanta, Norfolk, Richmond, Durham, Birmingham, and New Orleans, as well as rural areas with strong Democratic traditions: selected counties in the mountains of Virginia, North Carolina, and Kentucky, east Arkansas, midstate Tennessee, and the black belt.

For the most part, however, pro-Dukakis counties produced an 8 to 12 percent lower turnout than heavily pro-Bush areas, and many are losing population or growing at a much slower pace than the Republican strongholds.

Nationally and regionally, the numbers show the Democrats can't recapture Southern whites by peddling a message

that legitimates the fundamental tenet of the Republican Party — the privilege of wealth over the welfare of people. Nor can they win without aggressively challenging the GOP for swing constituencies — white women, wage-earning men, youth, and newly registered voters.

Here is a brief review of some of the state-by-state results across the region:

**Louisiana** U.S. Representative Clyde Holloway defeated Democrat Faye Williams in a rematch of their 1986 race, when Williams narrowly lost her bid to become the first black in the state to be elected to Congress since Reconstruction. A heavy turnout among whites gave Holloway a larger victory this time, 57 to 43 percent.

Holloway painted Williams as a lib-

eral on abortion and gun control, and a smear campaign focused on Williams' personal life, including the murder of her white boyfriend by her estranged husband 17 years ago.

Kathleen B. Blanco, a former state legislator, survived a similar negative campaign to become the first woman elected to the state Public Service Commission regulating utilities, trucking, and railroads. "When you're the first woman elected to any board, or office, it's a special thing," said the 45-year-old Democrat. "I received tremendous, tremendous support from women."

**Tennessee** Tennessee was the only state in the country where Democrats didn't improve on Walter Mondale's dismal 1984 showing. Bush even won the home county of Democratic Governor Ned McWherter, who said Dukakis "failed to communicate the basics to the voters." State Dukakis coordinator Peter Goetz complained of being "frustrated" because the Boston-based campaign refused to commit resources or build on existing Democratic networks in the state.

Ironically, Democratic Senator Jim Sasser, a moderate now in line to chair the Senate Budget Committee, won reelection by a whopping margin of 69 to 31 percent, demonstrating that ticket-splitting is now as routine in the South as in Ohio or New Jersey.

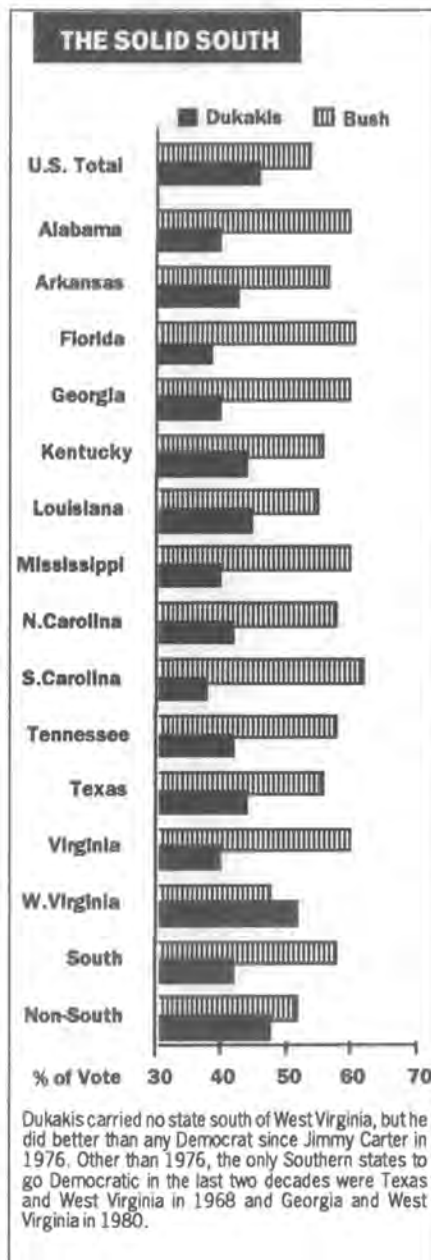
**North Carolina** Jim Martin became the state's first Republican governor to win reelection this century, unfazed by an issueless challenge from his ideological cousin, Lt. Governor Bob Jordan. His coattails helped elect the state's first Republican lieutenant governor this century, former congressman and Hardee's co-founder Jim Gardner. Republicans also gained more seats in the North Carolina legislature than in any other state in the region.

Three of the 11 congressional races were headed for neck-and-neck finishes, but incumbent Democrats held their seats in each case.

**Georgia** The increasingly Republican doughnut-shaped area around Atlanta produced several upsets in the Georgia legislature, as well as on local school boards and county commissions.

"In terms of party building, it's a major victory," said Lee Raudonis, state GOP executive director. "We're looking toward 1990 and the governor's race."

The bright spot in metro-Atlanta was





the congressional win by Ben Jones, a former actor on the *Dukes of Hazzard* and a pro-civil rights, tough-minded populist. Jones beat incumbent Pat Swindall, a fundamentalist Republican indicted two weeks before the election for pursuing an \$850,000 loan even after an undercover IRS agent told him it might include illegal drug profits.

**Alabama** Some of the hardest fought and most significant battles in the state took place during the Democratic primaries — still the most decisive election day for most offices in the South. In the primary for state Supreme Court, a coalition of labor unions and trial lawyers defeated candidates backed by insurance companies and big business. The winners faced relatively weak Republican opposition in November, marking another success for the progressive wing of the state Democratic Party.

**Mississippi** Democrat Mike Espy won reelection to the U.S. House with 40 percent of the white vote, virtually all the black vote, and 66 percent of the overall vote. Two years ago, when Espy became the first black to represent Mississippi in Congress in modern times, he garnered

only 10 percent of the white vote and 52 percent of the total. Since then, he has worked hard to gain the trust of white Delta farmers, hiring one of their own on his staff and lobbying the Pentagon to buy more of their products.

Republican Trent Lott won election to the Senate with as much as 15 percent of the black vote in a savvy campaign against Wayne Dowdy, a House member from Jackson. Lott outspent his opponent two-to-one and tagged him as a liberal, even though Dowdy supports the contras and opposes abortions. Lott, the House minority whip, got 82 percent of the vote in white precincts in Dowdy's home county, compared to three percent of the vote in black precincts.

**South Carolina** Liz Patterson, the first woman in the state elected to a full term in Congress, was also liberal-baited by her Republican opponent, even though she voted with Reagan on budget and defense issues. She countered ads calling her "Lefty Liz" and picturing her next to Dukakis with her own ads stressing her independence from national Democrats. As a result, she narrowly won reelection in the increasingly GOP district of Greenville and Spartanburg.

It was an isolated victory for the Democrats. Republicans tripled the number of GOP sheriffs across the state, took 20 other new county offices, ran twice as many candidates for the state legislature as in 1984, and gained three new seats as a result. After years of groundwork by Lee Atwater, the state's political parties now rank among the most racially polarized in the nation.

**Arkansas** Governor Bill Clinton predicted Arkansas would be Dukakis' strongest state in the Old South, but his forecast bellyflopped, much like his speech at the Democratic National Convention. Voters also overwhelmingly rejected a Clinton-backed amendment that would have revamped state tax policies.

On the positive side, Judith Rogers of North Little Rock became the first woman elected to the state Court of Appeals, and three other white women won terms as chancery court judges. Marion Humphrey became the first black elected judge in Little Rock in modern times, with the help of significant white support.

**Kentucky** A multi-year, grassroots campaign against abuses by strip-mining companies paid off with the passage of a constitutional amendment requiring holders of mineral rights to get permission

from landowners before strip-mining.

Kentuckians For The Commonwealth led the effort to place the amendment on the ballot. The measure passed with 82 percent of the vote, despite industry ads claiming it would jeopardize all house deeds. Opponents acknowledged that the victory demonstrated solid organizing by KFTC.

"There's nothing stronger than grassroots support," said Wayne Masterman, chair of the anti-amendment group, Kentuckians for Property Rights. "They just did a good job of developing and maintaining that kind of support."

**Virginia** Virginians voted for a Republican president for the ninth time in 10 elections, but former Democratic Governor Chuck Robb coasted into the Senate with an easy victory over his black Republican opponent, Maurice Dawkins, a supporter of televangelist Pat Robertson.

The Senate incumbent, Paul Trible, vacated the seat to run for governor in 1989. Other GOP contenders are likely to enter the race, but Lt. Governor Douglas Wilder, the South's highest ranking black elected to statewide office, already seems to have the Democratic nomination locked up.

—Bob Hall

## REPUBLICAN GAINS IN SOUTHERN STATE LEGISLATURES

Number of seats Republicans picked up in 1988 elections.

	Change from '87	Total Seats	
		D	R
N.Carolina	+14	110	60
Georgia	+9	189	47
Florida	+6	96	64
Tennessee	+3	81	51
Texas	+3	116	65
S.Carolina	+2	121	48
Arkansas	+2	118	16
Kentucky	0	102	36
Alabama*	0	119	21
Louisiana*	0	121	23
Mississippi*	0	159	15
Virginia*	0	94	44
W.Virginia	-3	108	26
<b>Total</b>	<b>+36</b>	<b>1,534</b>	<b>516</b>

\*No state legislative elections held in 1988

Democrats still dominate Southern state legislatures, but Republicans netted 36 new seats this year. Partisan competition in local races promises to intensify after the 1990 census, with Republicans and blacks pressuring conservative white Democrats to draw district lines that dilute their strength.

## TURNOUT GETTING WORSE

Percent of voting-age population voting for president

	1968	1980	1988
Louisiana	55	53	50
Mississippi	53	52	49
Kentucky	51	50	48
Virginia	50	48	48
W.Virginia	71	53	46
Arkansas	54	52	46
Alabama	53	49	45
Tennessee	54	49	44
Texas	49	45	44
N.Carolina	54	43	43
Florida	53	49	43
Georgia	44	41	38
S.Carolina	47	40	38
South	52	47	44
Non-South	64	55	51
<b>U.S. Total</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>49</b>

November saw the lowest turnout rate in a presidential election since 1924. Poverty, more than race, underlies the low turnout in the South. U.S. Census surveys show that whites in families with incomes under \$10,000 are less likely to vote than blacks in any income group, even those earning less than \$5,000.



# Flowers in the Desert Die

*America Latina se ha desplazado, despedazándose, sobre la geografía: ha extendido sus fronteras humanas dentro de los Estados Unidos, pero a condición de ganarse, por cuenta propia y frente a toda adversidad, su difícil derecha a la historia.*

**Latin America has displaced itself, spreading itself in pieces across geography: it has extended its human borders inside the United States, but on the condition of earning, on its own and before all adversity, its difficult right to history.**

— Dardo Cuneo

The South, like many other parts of the country, is beginning to reflect the culture and languages of its most recent migrants — those from the nations of Central America. The influence of Hondurans, Salvadorans, Nicaraguans, and Guatemalans stretches from the ranches of the Rio Grande Valley to the farm towns of Georgia and the Carolinas, from the housing projects of suburban Virginia to the barrios of Miami and Houston. Many convenience stores now stock tortillas alongside frozen biscuits; Spanish can be heard on the radio and in the workplace; apartment complexes that once were home to young white professionals now house families of Central American refugees.

This migration is relatively new. More than a million Central Americans have entered this country in the past decade, part of what one social scientist calls “the most important forced population movement in the history of Central America.” They are fleeing political violence, civil war, and genocide in their homelands. In a very real sense, they are “bringing home” to us the covert wars the United States is waging in Central America.

In countries like El Salvador, where peasants, students, and industrial workers alike have taken up arms to fight for food, shelter, and land, the United States has fueled the poverty and military brutality that has driven Salvadorans from their homes. The U.S. has given the military millions of dollars to bomb rural villages and massacre ordinary citizens. It has also cooperated with the right-wing death squads — closely linked to the military and government — that have kidnapped, tortured, and murdered thousands.

Those death squads have come to the South. As investigative

reporter Ross Gelbspan reveals in his article on page 32, death squads based in Houston are now terrorizing Salvadoran refugees with the same threat they use back home: “Flowers in the desert die.” In other words, you are alone. Resist, and we will kill you.

Violence and death — paid for by our tax dollars — have spread from Central America to the South. They are the memories of home our new neighbors carry with them.

The Salvadorans who now call Houston home, the Guatemalans who have joined the agricultural migrant stream that crosses our Southern states, the Nicaraguans who are arriving in Miami by the hundreds each week — these, in essence, are the new Southerners. Some have lived here for a decade or more; their children were born in the South and are growing up here.

Even those who return home will carry a piece of us with them. In some Guatemalan villages where only Mayan languages are spoken, young men carry Walkmen and listen to the Miami Sound Machine and cassette “letters” from cousins in Florida who speak of work, the elections, and the latest Dolphins score. Those refugees, those villages, will never be the same. We are tied to them by policies and politics, by terror and warfare, by what is, after all, a common history.

The economic, military, and cultural ties between the two regions predate the media’s current fascination with Central America. Indeed, the South and Central America now share so much in common that they might be viewed as a distinct southern region — the New South, as it were — a region brimming with cultural and racial diversity, yet still economically and politically subordinated to Yankee capital.

As historian Karl Bermann examines in his pioneering article on page 10, Southern planters and politicians have attempted to establish a tropical empire in Central America for more than a century. First came mercenaries like Tennessean William Walker, who repeatedly invaded Central America in the hopes of imposing slavery further south. Next came the entrepreneurs, who spread Southern culture throughout Central America. Towns like Puerto Cabezas on the Caribbean coast of Nicaragua actually had closer ties to Southern ports like Galveston and Mobile than to their own capitals. To this day, Colon — the second largest city in Panama — has the same street layout as New Orleans.

Over the years, right-wing extremists in the South and Central America have forged a powerful bond. Private groups like the Caribbean Commission in New Orleans connect ultraconservative church, political, and business leaders in Central America with their Southern counterparts. Senator Jesse Helms considers himself “good friends” with Roberto D’Aubuisson, the suspected leader of the Salvadoran death squads. Televangelists like Pat Robertson and Jimmy Swaggart often mobilize their congregations to support pro-contra legislation.

The ruling class in Central America and bankers in Miami are also well-connected. Miami now serves as the de facto banking capital of Central America. So much money has been diverted from national coffers in Central America that little is left for social welfare programs, health care, or education.

The Salvadoran death squads, the Nicaraguan contras, and the armies of Honduras and Guatemala also have strong connections with the U.S. military — and again the bond is usually forged in the South. Every year hundreds of officers from Central America come to Fort Benning in Georgia for advanced military training. There, as at Fort Bragg in North Carolina and MacDill Air Force Base in Florida, right-wing military officers compare notes on counter-insurgency tactics with their U.S. counterparts. In the evenings, they forge lasting friendships over Cuba Libres at the Officers Club.

Such powerful — and deadly — connections bring the wars in Central America home to us in a very real and frightening sense. Although polls consistently show that a majority of Southerners oppose U.S. foreign policy in Central America, the stories in this cover section of *Southern Exposure* demonstrate all too clearly that foreign policy isn’t shaped by majority opinion.

Across the South, our own government has waged a secret psychological war to manipulate the media and pressure Southern congressmen to support the contras. The FBI has spied on dozens of Southern groups opposed to U.S. policy in El Salvador, and actually cooperated with Salvadoran death squads based in Houston to intimidate Southern peace activists and Salvadoran citizens returning home. In South Texas, the government has turned the entire Rio Grande Valley into a giant “holding cell” for Central American refugees, setting up roadblocks and stirring up fears that refugees will commit crimes and take jobs away from U.S. citizens.

It could be worse yet. According to the *Miami Herald* and other sources, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) drew up “a controversial plan to suspend the Constitution in the event of a national crisis such as nuclear war, violent and widespread internal dissent, or national opposition to a U.S. military invasion abroad” at a time when two-thirds of

the American people opposed U.S. policy in Central America. FEMA requested access to FBI dossiers on 12,000 U.S. citizens it considered security threats and planned “Operation Night Train” to round up and detain 400,000 undocumented Central Americans.

Foreign policy has become confused with domestic policy; the lines between “us” and “them” have blurred. The war in Central America is a war at home.

Despite the concerted campaign to curtail democratic debate and civil liberties, there is plenty of reason for hope. The South and Central America share more than poverty and a history of slavery; they also share a rich tradition of community organizing and grassroots rebellion. From the revolutions of Central America to the civil rights movement of the South, ordinary citizens in both regions continue to struggle for democracy, economic justice, and human rights.

Many native Southerners are building a popular movement to end the wars in Central America. Faith-based groups like Jubilee Partners in Georgia and Casa Marianella in Texas have

provided much-needed sanctuary and shelter for refugees, while native Americans across the South have offered safe haven to Guatemala’s Kanjobal Indians who are being deported from Florida. Many national church groups, including Witness for Peace, have deep roots in the South, and have sent thousands of Southerners to see for themselves what’s happening in Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Honduras. And virtually every Southern town of any size, from Greenville, North Carolina to Biloxi, Mississippi, has at least one group devoted to education and activism on Central America.

Central American newcomers are also organizing at great personal risk for peace and justice, from the Refugio del Rio Grande in Harlingen, Texas to the Lee Gardens apartment complex in Arlington, Virginia. These new Southerners have brought with them more than first-hand experiences of war and poverty; they have brought a commitment to the same grassroots struggles underway in the South — struggles for a clean environment, fair housing, land reform, voting rights.

Those who are speaking out have not forgotten the death threats — *Flowers in the desert die*. They simply recognize that unity is stronger than fear, that when we work together, the desert can bloom. Just as bankers and ultraconservatives in the South and Central America work together for profits and power, Southerners at the grassroots, natives and newcomers alike, are building an alliance founded on dignity and respect. It is from this alliance that peace will emerge, both in Central America and here at home.

—The Editors



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U.S. NEWSPAPERS OFTEN DEPICTED CENTRAL AMERICAN NATIONS AS BLACK CHILDREN, AS IN “THE KIDS ARE IN BED AND ALL IS WELL,” CIRCA 1906.



# The Golden Circle

From slavery to bananas, the South has sought to build a tropical empire in Central America

*By Karl Bermann*

**I**n 1850, a Southerner named William Crittenden signed up to join a military expedition against Cuba, then a Spanish colony. A nephew of the U.S. attorney general, Crittenden was one of 400 men recruited from Kentucky, Louisiana, and Mississippi to invade the Caribbean island and establish a slave state for wealthy Southern backers.

Spanish troops crushed the expedition in August 1851, killing or capturing and later executing most of its mem-

bers. Taken prisoner, facing a firing squad, Crittenden refused to kneel or accept a blindfold. His last words: "A Kentuckian kneels to none except his God, and always dies facing his enemy."

"Filibusters," as the members of such privately organized expeditions were known, made several abortive attempts to invade Cuba and Mexico during the late 1840s and early 1850s. Thwarted in these efforts to expand their slave empire, Southern planters increasingly looked to Central America to enlarge their territory

and political power. What ensued was a violent history of illegal wars and intrigue as for more than a century the South sought to transform its southern neighbors into appendages of its own economy.

## THE FRONT YARD

Although the political upheaval in Central America has dominated headlines in recent years, our country's fixation on the region is really a very old one. Its roots are buried deep in our national history, where they intertwine tightly with the history of the South.

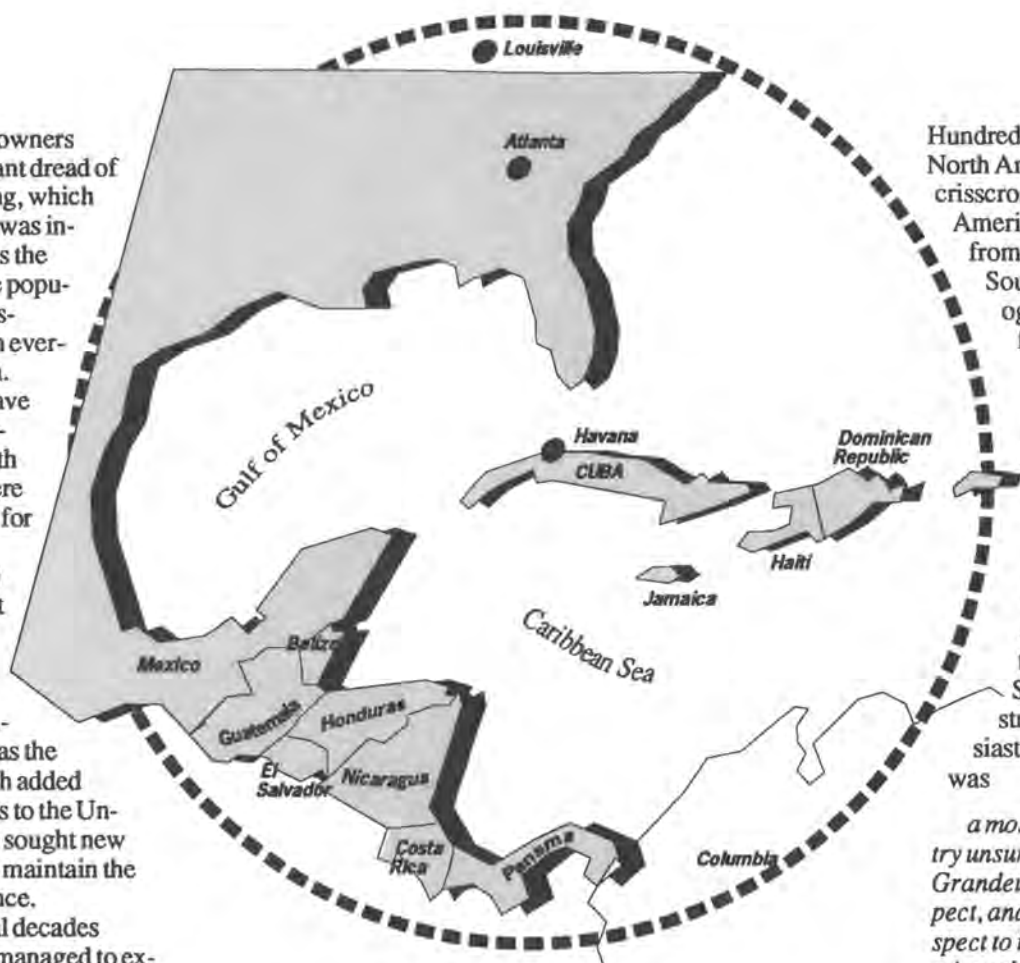
From the earliest days of our nationhood, U.S. political leaders, opinion-makers, and commercial interests looked to the Caribbean to boost our national progress. Since the Louisiana Purchase and the acquisition of Florida, the U.S., through its command of the Gulf of Mexico, has geographically dominated the Caribbean, a source of important trade even in the colonial era. Indeed, the very contour of the Gulf seems to grasp at the Caribbean. With the markets of Europe and Asia closed or dominated by older powers like England and France, the U.S. saw the prospect of turning the southern sea into its own Mediterranean.

The South, with its Gulf ports, obviously stood to be a prime beneficiary of such a relationship, and Southern politicians have always vociferously supported any scheme that promised to enlarge U.S. control or influence in the Caribbean. Thus, what the rest of the nation has often thought of as its "backyard" has long been the South's front yard.

But the pre-Civil War South had a special interest in Central America beyond the prospective advantages of commerce. Slavery — the "peculiar institution" upon which the South's way of life was founded, without which its planter society could not conceive of existence — required continual accretions of new territory. Agriculture based on slave labor was prodigiously inefficient; to be profitable it required vast tracts of naturally fertile soil, and these it exhausted rapidly.

And the slaveowners lived in constant dread of a slave uprising, which they believed was inevitable unless the growing slave population were dispersed over an ever-widening area. Also, older slave states like Virginia and South Carolina, where raising slaves for sale to other states came to replace export agriculture, had a vested interest in slavery expansion. Finally, as the westward push added new free states to the Union, the South sought new slave states to maintain the political balance.

For several decades slaveholders managed to expand their territory and maintain their political position by forcing, under threat of secession, a series of compromises — the Missouri Compromise (1820), the Compromise of 1850, and the Kansas-Nebraska Bill (1854) — that gave them a share of the new Western states. But the “doctrine of popular sovereignty,” whose inclusion in the Kansas-Nebraska Bill the South had demanded because it eliminated all geographical barriers to slavery, boomeranged on its sponsors. Abolitionists and free-soil farmers, mobilizing and arming themselves, thwarted Southern efforts to impose slavery in Kansas. With their defeat in the 1854-1856 Kansas Civil War, the slaveholders turned their attention to the Caribbean as the only remaining avenue for expansion.



**A MYSTERIOUS ORDER CALLED THE KNIGHTS OF THE GOLDEN CIRCLE ENVISIONED A SLAVE EMPIRE WITH HAVANA AT ITS CENTER, SPANNING 2,400 MILES FROM LOUISVILLE TO PANAMA CITY.**

### PLANTATION PARADISE

It was in Central America that opportunity for such expansion seemed to knock loudest. The world had long recognized the potential for an Atlantic-to-Pacific canal across the Central American isthmus. After the U.S. acquired California, the gold rush and the prospect of lucrative trade with Asia sent representatives of private enterprise and the U.S. government alike scurrying over Central America in search of a canal right-of-way or other transit concessions. By 1851, shipping magnate Cornelius Vanderbilt had established a riverboat and coach service across Nicaragua, cutting weeks off the journey to the West Coast.

Hundreds of thousands of North Americans were soon crisscrossing Central America on their way to and from the gold fields, and Southerners quickly recognized the potential for plantation agriculture in Central America's balmy climate and rich volcanic soil. Kentuckian Elijah Hise, appointed charge d'affaires in Central America in 1848 by the expansionist, pro-Southern Polk administration, reported enthusiastically that Honduras was

*a most magnificent Country unsurpassed in Scenes of Grandeur and Sublimity of Aspect, and unrivalled in Respect to its Agricultural and mineral resources. Gold Silver and Copper are or rather might be its Mineral productions; Sugar, Coffee, Rice, Indian Corn, Cotten, Cochineal and Indigo Die woods of*

*Various Kinds, Valuable timber of several kinds, all kinds of Tropical Fruits, are or might become its productions from the Soil, which as I am Informed, is of Great and Exhaustless fertility.*

Acting without instructions, Hise negotiated a draft treaty giving the U.S. exclusive rights to all forms of transit across Nicaragua. The treaty, he argued, would contribute to “the perpetuation of the American Union,” meaning it would facilitate the acquisition of Central America as fresh territory for slavery expansion, thus appeasing the South and reducing the threat of secession. In the contentious years that followed, Southerners and their Northern Democratic

allies would continually repeat this refrain. By the time Hise's treaty reached Washington, however, President Polk had left office and the incoming Taylor administration repudiated the document.

Intoxicated by the emerging doctrine of Manifest Destiny — which asserted the Anglo-Saxon race's "natural right" to rule the Americas — many whites in the United States, North and South, simply assumed that Central America would sooner or later be part of the U.S. The most conscious slavery partisans, however, were unwilling to wait for destiny to take its course. Confronted in the 1850s with a succession of administrations in Washington that disappointed their expectations for territorial expansion, Southerners began to take matters into their own hands.

To expand slavery, wealthy planters and others organized filibustering expeditions. Most of their recruits were poor Southern whites enticed by the prospect of glory and fortune, and the hope that in conquered territory they themselves might become masters of plantations and owners of slaves.

With their defeat in Kansas and the failure of filibustering expeditions to Cuba and Mexico, Southern expansionists came to see Central America as the key to a new slave empire. As it happened, they were aided by the situation in the five Central American republics. Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica had been united until 1838. But bloody feuding between Liberals and Conservatives split the federation apart and kept the isthmus in turmoil, and some Central American leaders enlisted North American mercenaries under their banner.

Nowhere was the internal weakness more apparent, the allure of virgin soil more promising, than in Nicaragua. The largest of the Central American states, it sat astride what was then the most likely route for an interoceanic canal. Many who traveled as passengers of Vander-

bilt's Nicaragua Transit Company, particularly Southerners, were enticed by the country's potential as a plantation paradise. [See sidebar, page 15.]

The first recorded filibuster among them was John Maclaine of Louisiana, who in 1851 got himself commissioned a colonel by Nicaragua's Liberal faction, then warring against the country's Conservatives. Recruiting some 25 other North Americans who were passing through Nicaragua on their way to Cali-



Engravings from Harper's Weekly

**HUNDREDS OF MERCENARIES — MOSTLY POOR WHITE SOUTHERNERS — DIED IN WILLIAM WALKER'S EFFORT TO EXTEND SLAVERY TO CENTRAL AMERICA.**

formia, Maclaine planned to capture a Conservative stronghold. But Conservative troops took the *gringos* by surprise, killing three and wounding several others. Only the intervention of a U.S. diplomat saved Maclaine from a firing squad.

### THE MAN OF DESTINY

A few years after Maclaine escaped with his life, the most notorious filibuster of all time arrived in Nicaragua. Though long neglected by historians, William Walker put his indelible stamp on the momentous half-decade preceding the Civil War. Born in Nashville, Walker studied for a medical career and later co-edited the New Orleans *Crescent*, but he ultimately decided that his real calling was filibustering.

Walker first gained national attention with a failed invasion of Mexico in 1853. Two years later, he and 57 followers ar-

rived on Nicaragua's Pacific coast, where civil war had broken out again. Following in Maclaine's footsteps, Walker had signed a contract with the Liberals to help turn the tide in their favor.

Aided by a string of fortuitous circumstances, Walker played Nicaragua's political factions against each other and turned the situation to his own account. Money, arms, and reinforcements poured in from the U.S., courtesy of Vanderbilt and powerful backers in the South.

Within six months Walker had become Nicaragua's military strong man, and in 1856 he proclaimed himself president. He immediately re-legalized slavery, which had been outlawed in 1824.

Nicaraguans revolted. The other Central American nations, aware that Walker's plans included them, joined the struggle. Even Vanderbilt switched sides when Walker revoked his transit franchise. By early 1857, Central American troops had all but wiped out Walker's army, which at its peak numbered several thousand well-armed men, many of them veterans of the

Mexican War. Besieged in the Nicaraguan town of Rivas, reduced to a few hundred feverish and half-starved followers, Walker fled the country under U.S. Navy escort in May 1857.

He returned to a hero's welcome in New Orleans, and traveled to Charleston, Nashville, and Mobile to organize the "Central America League," a clandestine group designed to fund a second invasion. His fundraising appeals were always based on the need to spread slavery further south. Writing of the "inferior races," Walker warned that "if the South wishes to get her institutions into tropical America she must do so before treaties are made to embarrass her action and hamper her energies ... in the effort to re-establish slavery in Central America."

Walker attempted twice more to invade Central America. Ultimately, he was captured by the British navy, handed over to Honduran authorities, and executed by

a firing squad in 1860. Seeking to establish a slave empire tied to the South, he had succeeded only in turning Nicaragua into a field of gore. Thousands of North Americans, mostly Southerners, perished there, having suffered inglorious and often horrible deaths for an ignominious cause. And for each North American corpse there were an estimated 10 casualties among the Central Americans.

## THE DIPLOMATS

Usually ceding center stage to the filibusters, but playing their part in expansionist plans all the same, were Southern diplomats. Receiving their appointments as political plums from pro-slavery Democratic administrations, these point men for Manifest Destiny often put the interests of their region first, those of the nation they officially represented second.

Notable among them was Solon Borland, a former U.S. senator from Arkansas assigned to Nicaragua by the Pierce administration in 1853. The follow-

ing year, Borland witnessed the murder of a black man by the white captain of a Vanderbilt riverboat. When the town marshal and his deputies tried to arrest the killer at San Juan del Norte, Borland warned them off at gunpoint. That night the U.S. diplomat was accosted by angry townspeople and slightly injured in the scuffle.

Unable to produce new territory for his Southern backers, President Pierce seized on the alleged "insult" to Borland to pose as a champion of white supremacy. When San Juan refused to pay monetary reparations, Pierce sent a naval vessel to bombard and burn the town. Justifying the destruction in a message to Congress, Pierce denounced San Juan as a "pretended community, a heterogeneous assemblage... composed for the most part of blacks and persons of mixed blood" who had followed "a course of insolence and plunder." Though condemned elsewhere, the action was

strongly applauded in the South.

The Southerners who succeeded Borland as Nicaraguan envoy were also strong advocates of slavery. John Hill Wheeler of North Carolina earned a reputation as "the filibuster minister" for his enthusiastic support of William Walker, and reportedly helped Walker write the decree that reinstated slavery. William Carey Jones, an alcoholic Washington lawyer sent by President Buchanan to survey the region in the aftermath of the Walker fiasco, reported back that "the ul-



**STRONG RESISTANCE BY THE CENTRAL AMERICAN NATIONS FORCED WALKER AND HIS TROOPS TO RETREAT FROM THE NICARAGUAN TOWN OF MASAYA.**

imate dominancy here of our race" was certain. Mirabeau Bonaparte Lamar, another Buchanan appointee and himself the one-time president of the Texas Republic, repeatedly urged Buchanan to intervene militarily in Nicaragua. But Congress, then polarized by the slavery issue, refused to grant Buchanan the necessary approval for expansionist military adventures.

## THE GOLDEN CIRCLE

The filibusters and their diplomatic allies had hoped to make Central America the base for establishing a slave empire that would eventually unite Mexico, Cuba, and the rest of the Caribbean with the Southern states. Notwithstanding Southern disappointment over Walker's failure, the evanescent vision of tropical empire continued to tantalize planter society, holding out the hope of new life for

a regime whose time had expired.

Clinging to that vision was a mysterious order called the Knights of the Golden Circle, whose founding convention was held at White Sulphur Springs, Virginia, in 1859. The Knights took their name from the fantasy of a slave empire that would take the form of a circle with Havana at its center, spanning 2,400 miles from the South to Central America. Included in the Knights' initiation ritual was a pledge to extend slavery over the whole of Central America immediately

following the conquest of Mexico.

Although the order apparently did not include many Southern leaders, its chapters spread rapidly and widely across the South. The Knights soon assembled a filibuster army of several thousand men who were poised to attack Mexico in 1860, just as Lincoln's election and the perceived need to defend existing slave territory cut short their plans. (In some areas the Knights' military units became nuclei of the Confederate armies.)

With the South's defeat in the Civil War, slavery expansion became a dead issue.

Ironically, however, just as the Lincoln administration was ending the slavery threat to Central America, it approved a plan that seemed to Central Americans nothing more than filibustering in a new disguise.

Many Northern whites, despite their opposition to slavery, believed that free blacks and whites could not live together harmoniously in the U.S. Accordingly, in 1862, Lincoln approved a plan to resettle freed slaves in Central America, Yucatan, or Colombia. U.S. diplomats approached their Latin counterparts about the scheme, and Congress appropriated the funds in July 1862. The various governments responded favorably at first, but cooled after Lincoln promised a black delegation that freed slaves would go to Central America under U.S. "protection."

A similar proposal, authored by Union General Benjamin F. Butler in 1865, would have transported the 150,000 ex-

slaves serving in the Union army to Panama to dig a canal. Lincoln referred Butler's plan to Secretary of State Seward, but its consideration was cut short by the president's assassination a few days later.

## THE GOLDEN MARKETS

For the South, slavery was gone, but the vision of a tropical empire in Central America was not. During Reconstruction, Southerners began to eye the region anew — seeing Latin nations as “natural markets” for their products.

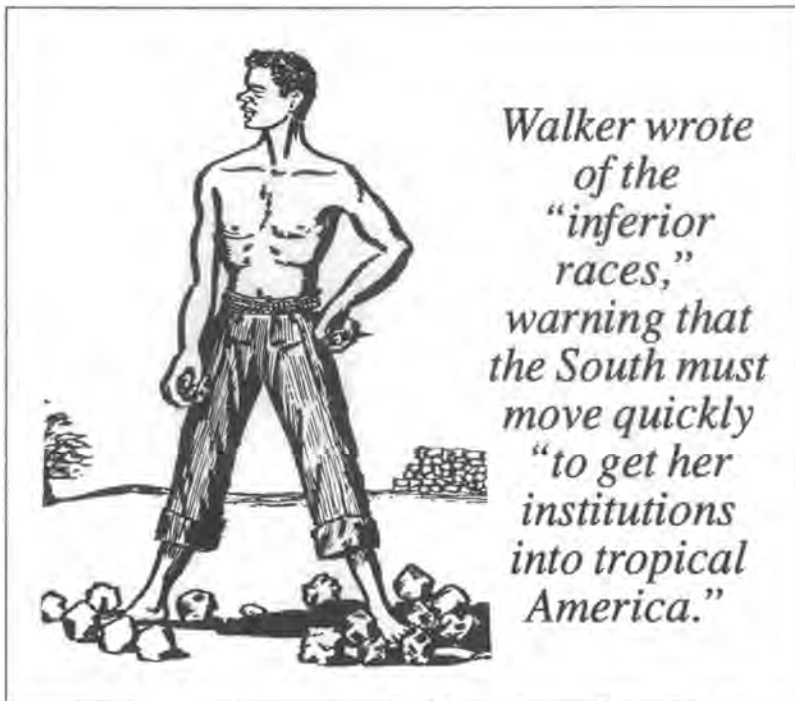
The South's economy depended heavily on exports. Even in the best of years, the U.S. market absorbed a mere third of the Southern cotton crop. Cotton production doubled between 1870 and 1890, and the manufacture of cotton cloth increased fivefold, but the depression of 1893-97 dried up both domestic demand and the South's traditional markets in Europe. Again the region looked further south for a solution to its woes. A major exposition held in Atlanta in 1895 and smaller trade shows throughout the South promoted trade with Central and South America, bringing new commercial ties with Costa Rica, Guatemala, and Mexico.

In the minds of most Southerners, the quest for expanded markets was intimately connected with the idea of an interoceanic canal across Central America. Nicaragua was still favored as the site after a U.S. survey team recommended that route in 1874, and a private firm called the Maritime Canal Company actually began work in 1889. Senator John T. Morgan of Alabama, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, was one of its chief boosters.

A former Confederate general, Morgan has been described as “an almost fanatical” Nicaragua canal enthusiast. Declared Morgan in the Senate: “There can not be anything done for the Southern people of equal advantage to the building of the Nicaragua canal, so as to give us access to the eastern Asiatic countries for our cotton.” When the Maritime Canal

Company's coffers ran dry in 1893, Morgan introduced a bill to have Congress guarantee the company's bonds. A coalition of competing interests defeated the Morgan Bill, however, and the company defaulted in 1899.

Nicaragua canal partisans ultimately lost out to backers of the Panama Canal, but the notion that a Nicaragua canal — several hundred miles closer to Gulf ports than Panama — would somehow benefit the South died hard. In the 1920s, when the volume of ship traffic threatened to clog the newly completed Panama Canal,



*Drawing courtesy Imprenta Hospicio, Leon, Nicaragua*

**NICARAGUAN HERO ANDRES CASTRO KILLED ONE OF WALKER'S FILIBUSTERS WITH A STONE WHEN HIS CARBINE FAILED DURING THE BATTLE OF SAN JACINTO IN 1856.**

*Walker wrote of the “inferior races,” warning that the South must move quickly “to get her institutions into tropical America.”*

Southern leaders renewed their call for a Nicaragua canal — only to have their hopes dashed by the Depression. Representative Carl Vinson of Georgia, chairman of the House Committee on Naval Affairs, floated the plan again in the mid-1930s, arguing that the Panama Canal was vulnerable to earthquakes and military attack (and, incidentally, that a second canal through Nicaragua would improve trade with Latin America).

## THE GOLDEN FRUIT

Just as Southern interest in a canal intensified, the commercialization of bananas was creating new and powerful links between Southern ports and Central American markets. During the 1870s and 1880s, steamship companies established

regular runs between New Orleans and the emerging Central American banana ports. For merchants in New Orleans, bananas were truly golden. In the 1880s, a New Orleans steamship owner could buy 100 stems of bananas in Guatemala for about \$40 and, in the words of a contemporary reporter:

*The steamer people, after a voyage of four days, during which all their expenses are paid by the passenger-list and the Government mail-subsidies, sell the bananas on the wharf in New Orleans for \$125 ... clearing \$85; while the planter, for a whole year's labor put into the bananas, gets \$30 ... it is not uncommon for the profits of a single round trip of two weeks to exceed \$40,000.*

The returning ships carried the entrepreneurs and would-be entrepreneurs who sought to make a killing in Central American bananas, timber, or mining. Where the filibusters had failed, it seemed, businessmen would succeed. Those who did went a long way toward realizing the dream that eluded their Southern forerunners, building an empire based not on slavery (at least not in the literal sense), but on finance and commerce — their “golden circle” described by the banana

boats' ports of call.

The adventurers of antebellum Dixie were investors, international carpetbaggers of sorts, who transplanted planter society to the banana farms of Central America. One of the first and most successful was Minor Keith, a New Yorker who emigrated to Padre Island, Texas after the Civil War and established himself as a hog rancher. Keith's uncle and brother had signed a contract with Costa Rica to build a railroad. Persuaded that “I would make more money in Costa Rica in three years than I could make in Texas all my life,” Keith sold his Texas properties and moved to Costa Rica. Although his relatives defaulted on their contract, Keith took over the railroad project and finished it himself.

Keith's operations in Central America closely involved the South. As soon as his



company began work on the port at Limon, Costa Rica, Keith established steamship service from New Orleans, the first regular service to a Central American port since the demise of Vanderbilt's Nicaragua operation in William Walker's time.

Symbolic of the South's new assault on Central America, 40 veterans of the Walker invasion were among the first 700 railroad workers Keith recruited in New Orleans. Reminiscent also of Walker's macabre legacy, nearly all the recruits

died in the Costa Rican jungle from yellow fever, other diseases, or accidents, as did hundreds more brought from New Orleans, Jamaica, and elsewhere.

A nightmarish total of 4,000 corpses lined the first 20 miles of rail.

Keith's ships carried supplies and machinery from New Orleans to Costa Rica and returned with cargoes of

wood, coconuts, and tortoise shell, and—most important—the first bananas to reach New Orleans markets. Soon Keith grew bananas all along his railroad right-of-way through Costa Rica's Caribbean lowlands.

In 1899, Keith merged his business with the then-largest U.S. banana operator, Boston Fruit Company. The result was United Fruit, which more than any of its competitors would make



COLONEL KINNEY, FOUNDER OF THE TEXAS RANGERS

Although the new "monarch" and his British patrons had repudiated the spurious claim, Kinney had reason to believe the U.S. would back him. He

had reportedly met personally with President Franklin Pierce, a pro-Southern Democrat who had campaigned on a Manifest Destiny platform, and the stockholders in his venture included Pierce's attorney general and a U.S. Senator. Among his confidants was Joseph Warren Fabens, the U.S. commercial agent at San Juan, himself an ex-colonel of the Texas Republic army. Fabens, in turn, was a good friend of Vanderbilt's company, which also seemed to look favorably on Kinney's "colonization" scheme.

An article by a sympathetic correspondent in the December 15, 1854 *New York Times* captured the flavor of Kinney's appeal: "Central America is destined to occupy an influential position in the family of nations, if her advantages of location, climate and soil are availed of by a race of 'Northmen,' who shall supplant the tainted, mongrel and decaying race which now curses it so fearfully."

But the enterprise was destined to failure. A federal grand jury indicted Kinney and Fabens in April 1855 for planning a military expedition in violation of U.S. neutrality. Released on bond, Kinney easily evaded half-hearted Coast Guard efforts to stop him, and set out for Nicaragua. But his "colo-

nists," scared off by the indictments and adverse publicity, had dwindled to 13. Influential supporters had likewise bolted. Arriving in San Juan, Kinney took control of the municipal administration and proclaimed himself "governor." But he failed to attract further support, and a year later he returned, broke, to the U.S. Landing again in San Juan in 1858, he was arrested by the British and turned over to the U.S. Navy. —K.B.

## Black and White in Greytown

Southern expansionists were drawn to Nicaragua for a variety of reasons, not the least of which were its geographic and ethnic divisions. The country's Atlantic Coast was inhabited by the Miskito ethnic group, a mixture of indigenous peoples, escaped African slaves, and European pirates. The swampy, sparsely-populated Miskito Coast was cut off from the rest of the country by forbidding mountains and jungle. England had claimed a protectorate over the area since 1740, establishing a puppet "Miskito Kingdom" and crowning a Miskito "king."

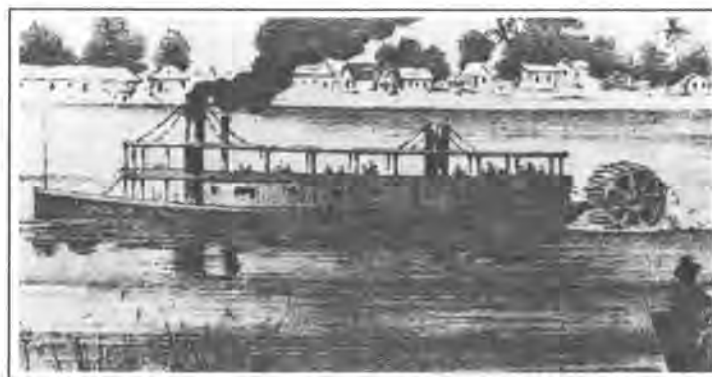
In 1848, the British seized the port of San Juan del Norte from Nicaragua and renamed it Greytown. When Cornelius Vanderbilt made it the eastern terminus of his Nicaragua transit, the town existed in diplomatic limbo, a sort of free port. Blacks from Jamaica and elsewhere, including escaped Southern slaves, came to dominate the local administration.

Needless to say, North Americans passing through the region in that era were unaccustomed to dealing with blacks in positions of authority. Southern whites considered San Juan an open sore and viewed the entire Miskito Kingdom with contempt: the British were their bogeymen, rivals for Caribbean empire.

Among Southerners who viewed San Juan as a special target was Colonel Henry L. Kinney, an early Anglo settler in Texas and a founder of Corpus Christi and the Texas Rangers.

Kinney made millions trading livestock and speculating in Texas land, and in 1854 he used some of his profits to buy a claim to 22.5 million acres on the Miskito Coast—about 70 percent of Nicaragua's total land area. He began advertising in leading newspapers for prospective colonists.

Kinney bought the deed from a trader in San Juan who had acquired it years earlier from the Miskito "king," said to have been drunk at the time.



Engravings from Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper

BLACKS FROM JAMAICA AND ESCAPED SOUTHERN SLAVES DOMINATED THE GOVERNMENT OF GREYTOWN, A PORT ON THE EAST COAST OF NICARAGUA.

the banana practically synonymous with the Crescent City: even in its first year, two or three United banana steamers unloaded at New Orleans docks each day. By 1905 New Orleans was the world's largest fruit importing terminal, distributing nine million banana stems annually — almost as many as all other U.S. ports combined.

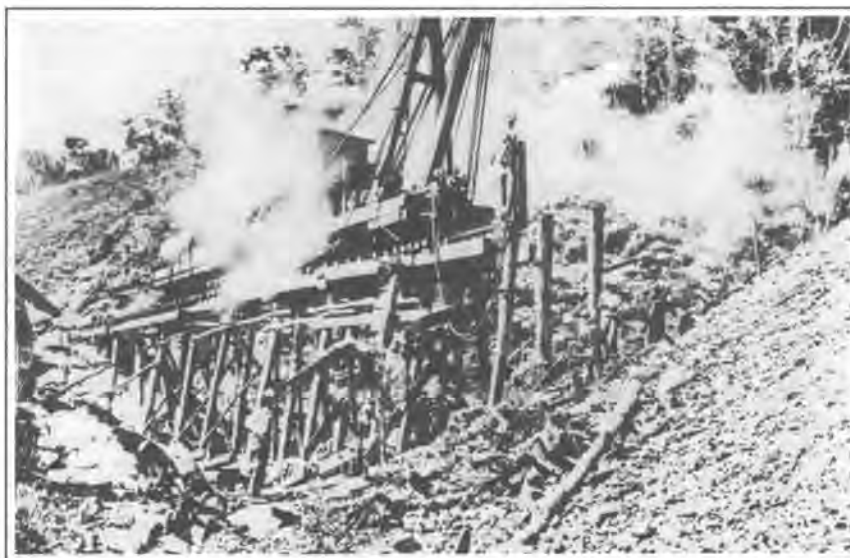
That same year — 1905 — a yellow fever epidemic struck the Gulf Coast. The public blamed the banana trade, and for three months New Orleans authorities banned all banana imports. More than 450 persons died in New Orleans alone, but the *Daily Picayune* worried less about the victims of yellow fever than what the ban on yellow fruit was doing to the city's business. It was an indication of how important New Orleans' ties to Central America had become.

Prominent among Louisianans who enriched themselves on those ties were the Vaccaro brothers, Italian immigrants who had established a citrus business in the Mississippi River delta after the Civil War. When a severe winter destroyed their crops in 1899, they began importing bananas from Honduras. Over the next 70 years they and their descendants built Standard Fruit, one of the banana industry giants. By the late 1960s, when surviving family members sold their interest to Castle and Cooke, a San Francisco-based conglomerate, Standard handled one-third of the world's banana trade, having overtaken United Fruit as the largest importer of bananas into the United States.

Headquartered in New Orleans, the Vaccaros based their operations in La Ceiba, Honduras, a company town they helped build. With the millions made on Honduran bananas, the family extended its empire over much of Central America. They branched out into sugar, banking, brewing, and manufacturing in Honduras; lumbering in Nicaragua; and banking, ice making, hotel management, and even industrial gases in New Orleans itself. The Vaccaros' success enabled them to overcome anti-Italian prejudice and

gain status in New Orleans society — so much so that the New Orleans press declared a 1925 testimonial for them “the greatest civic tribute ever accorded individuals” in that city.

Close on the heels of the Vaccaros came Samuel Zemurray, a Russian-Jewish fruit jobber in Mobile, Alabama who acquired much of the prime banana land remaining in Honduras. In 1930, United Fruit took over Zemurray's Cuyamel Fruit Company for \$32 million in stock, making “Sam the Banana Man” United's largest stockholder and soon its managing director.



ONE OF THE FIRST RAILROADS BUILT BY SOUTHERN AND CENTRAL AMERICAN WORKERS, BRINGING BANANAS FROM INLAND FARMS TO LA CEIBA, HONDURAS.

Photo from company archives.

## JIM CROW

Dominance by the U.S. fruit companies gave the Central American states, particularly Honduras and Guatemala, their reputations as “banana republics,” most of whose stereotypical connotations are all too familiar. But it also enabled the South to recreate its way of life along the Caribbean rim. If La Ceiba, Honduras looked like a typical company town, Southern-style, so did other fruit company enclaves like Puerto Cabezas, Nicaragua (built by a Vaccaro Brothers subsidiary), and Puerto Barrios, Guatemala (literally owned by United Fruit). They were all the same — a pier jutting from the jungle to the sea, a narrow-gauge rail line, a cluster of shacks for workers, the clapboard, neo-Victorian structures that housed supervisors, and the ubiquitous company store where often workers bought goods with the coupons or scrip they were paid in lieu of currency. All

were suburbs, or colonies, of New Orleans, Mobile, and Galveston.

But the resemblances were more than physical. Also transposed to the tropics were Southern social relations. The fruit companies imported black workers from the South as well as from Jamaica to help offset a shortage of native hands on the “banana coast.” Most supervisors and overseers, meanwhile, were Southern whites who brought their racial attitudes with them. Often these were codified into company policy, as in Guatemala, where United Fruit required “all persons of color to give right of way to whites and remove their hats when talking to them.”

Jim Crow reached as far south as Panama, where skilled jobs in the construction of the canal were reserved for whites, most of whom were Southerners. Paid in U.S. gold dollars, these workers were known as the “gold roll.” Unskilled laborers, mostly blacks, received their pay in Panamanian silver currency, and were known as the “silver roll.” Racial segregation as such was prohibited on federal projects like the canal. Instead, separate facilities — down to water fountains — were designated as

“gold roll” or “silver roll.” With five-sevenths of the canal work force made up of West Indian blacks intolerant of such discrimination, the export of Jim Crow to Panama caused serious labor problems.

Poor Southern whites were drawn to Central America for the same reasons their fathers had joined the filibusters. By the hundreds came Dixie's displaced — the descendants of plantation overseers, filibusters, and Johnny Rebs — drawn, like their ancestors, by the tropic's seductive promise of fortune or adventure. Most were deceived, but not all.

Among the latter was Lee Christmas of Louisiana, a railroad engineer blackballed in the U.S. for wrecking a train while drunk. In 1894, Christmas took a job in Honduras “hogging” a banana locomotive to the wharf at Puerto Cortes. Three years later, a band of Honduran rebels commandeered his train, and Christmas joined up. The revolt failed. But the would-be revolutionists

were soon pardoned, and Christmas had added derring-do to his reputation for hard drinking and promiscuity. Viewing him as an insurance policy, successive governments in Tegucigalpa made Christmas head of the federal police and later a general in the Honduran army.

For a dozen years Christmas played a pivotal role in the country's tumultuous politics. He was President Manuel Bonilla's right-hand bully until Bonilla fell in 1907. In 1911 Samuel Zemurray financed a revolt led by Christmas that returned Bonilla to power. (Among the many Southerners who joined Christmas was Guy "Machine Gun" Molony, who later became New Orleans chief of police.)

Bonilla rewarded Zemurray with an enormous banana concession and Christmas with a thousand-acre coconut plantation and several jobs with lavish salaries, including commandant of Puerto Cortes. From that post Christmas headed numerous enterprises, several illicit. But the Hondurans eventually tired of Christmas and cut him loose in 1915. Accustomed to high living, the soldier of fortune quickly squandered his new-found wealth. In 1924, penniless, back in New Orleans, Christmas died of a tropical disease.

Political stability was not a hallmark of the Banana Republics, and U.S. companies operating there often sought — and received — assistance from the U.S. Marines to protect their interests. But the banana companies themselves frequently instigated disorders, seeing some advantage in a change of regime, as with Zemurray and the Honduran revolt of 1911.

U.S. companies operating along Nicaragua's Caribbean coast promoted a series of uprisings between 1894 and 1910. For many years these businesses had enjoyed a cozy relationship with the British-backed Miskito authorities, and they actively resisted plans to reincorporate the region into Nicaragua. Finally, in 1909,

they sponsored a determined effort to overthrow the country's nationalist president, Jose Santos Zelaya. Conservative rebels, financed and armed by U.S. companies, recruited mercenaries in New Orleans.

Virginian Lee Roy Cannon and Texan Leonard Groce, both commissioned as colonels in the rebel ranks, were captured while trying to blow up a riverboat carrying government soldiers. They were tried and sentenced to death. President Zelaya turned down their appeals for clemency, determined to dissuade other latter-day filibusters. The conservative Taft admini-

ray was at it again, this time campaigning for the overthrow of Guatemalan President Jacobo Arbenz, who sought to institute land reform. This time, unlike 1911, as chief executive of United Fruit, with the Cold War raging, Zemurray had at his service the CIA, the State Department, and Ambassador John Puerifoy of South Carolina. A CIA-sponsored "liberation army" ousted Arbenz and installed in his place the brutal regime of Carlos Castillo Armas.

Today the banana companies are gone from Nicaragua, along with the U.S. mining concerns and timber operators, unwilling to cooperate with the Sandinista government that replaced dictator Anastasio Somoza in 1979. Elsewhere in Central America, the banana companies and their employees, while still important, maintain a lower profile. Since the mid-1960s, they have been joined by manufacturing companies, such as Texas Instruments in El Salvador, attracted by pliant governments and cheap labor.

The slave South's desire for territorial conquest in Central America resolved into the broader imperatives of economic expansionism, just as transnational conglomerates later absorbed or grew out of the Southern companies operating there. In the same way, Southern attitudes and policies toward Central America live on, incorporated today in the policy of our nation. In Central America's tortured present reverberate echoes of Dixie's filibustering past. The contra war against Nicaragua, the U.S.-backed aerial bombardment and the mass killing in El Salvador, the long reign of terror in Guatemala, the military dictators in Honduras — all can be traced, at least in part, to the South's vision of destiny and glory in a tropical empire. □

*Karl Bermann is director of the Tidewater Nicaragua Project Foundation in Hampton Roads, Virginia. He is author of Under the Big Stick: Nicaragua and the United States Since 1848 (South End Press, 1986), and editor of Sandino Without Frontiers (Compita Publishing, 1988).*



Illustration copyright 1910, The Baltimore Sun Co.

TURN-OF-THE-CENTURY CARTOONS TYPICALLY PORTRAYED CENTRAL AMERICAN NATIONS AS ERRANT CHILDREN, AS IN, "CUTTING A SWITCH FOR A BAD BOY."

stration, which until then had supported the rebels covertly, seized on the execution of Cannon and Groce as a pretext to break relations with Zelaya and intervene openly. With Taft's help, the rebels triumphed, and Nicaragua became a U.S. protectorate.

The fruit companies would continue to dominate Central America for years to come. In 1954, four decades after financing the Honduran revolt headed by Lee Christmas, "Banana Man" Sam Zemur-

**HONDURAN WOMAN WASHES DISHES AT A REFUGEE CAMP IN SOUTH TEXAS. THE FMLN IS A REBEL GROUP FIGHTING THE EL SALVADORAN GOVERNMENT.**

*Photos by Dennis Dunleavy, San Antonio Express-News.*





# Valley So Low

The Border Patrol  
has turned South Texas  
into a vast  
prison camp for  
refugees

By Jane Juffer

**H**ARLINGEN, TEXAS — Three young boys slump on the couch in the makeshift waiting room of Proyecto Libertad, a non-profit legal aid group for

Central American refugees. Jose Erick, Jose Sarvelio, and Napoleon, exhausted from the thousand-mile journey from their home in El Salvador, have just enough energy left to annoy their uncles with questions of when they will be able to join relatives in Canada.

Near the water cooler sits Ovidio, a 31-year-old *campesino* from the war-battered province of San Miguel, El Salvador. His tattered suitcase rests on his lap, and his wet pants legs attest to his early morning arrival from *el otro lado* — the other side.

Next to him is Angela, who is nursing her baby. She and her family left Guatemala a few weeks ago, crossing Mexico by bus and the Rio Grande River

on foot. The group was arrested and turned back by the U.S. Border Patrol when they attempted to pass a military-style checkpoint in a Greyhound bus headed for Houston.

These refugees — and thousands of others from Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua — have come to the United States seeking refuge from war and hunger. What they have found instead is a government determined to trap them at the Texas border, turn local residents against them, and literally starve them back to Central America.

Angela, Ovidio, and the other families crowding Proyecto Libertad's office in Harlingen have been forbidden to leave the area unless they post a \$3,000 bond per person. They have no jobs, nowhere to live, and no way to raise the money to buy their freedom. They will spend the coming months battling the federal bureaucracy, trying to join

their families and put their lives back together.

The reason for such harassment, say refugee advocates in Texas, is political. Most of the refugees are eyewitnesses to the horrors of U.S. foreign policy in Central America. Many offer direct testimony of murder, torture, and hunger, yet they are forced to seek refuge in the same country that has trained and armed soldiers to kill their families and friends back home.

The U.S. government is detaining Central American refugees in the South because it "had to stop people from leaving," says Lisa Brodyaga, founder of Proyecto Libertad. "What they don't want is legal people running around addressing North Americans about foreign policy without the fear of being arrested."

## WELCOME TO AMERICA

Most Central American refugees enter El Norte through the South, crossing the U.S. border into the Rio Grande Valley. The land here exists in a quiet state of siege, under constant surveillance by Border Patrol agents of *la Migra* — Immigration and Naturalization Services. The patrol uses radar, helicopters, sophisticated night binoculars, local informants, and a three-ton military land rover known as the "Hummer" to police the Valley and arrest anyone crossing the border without permission.

More important, though, the agency has taken advantage of the Valley's geographic isolation and devastating poverty to enforce bond and detention policies that make the area the toughest place along the border for refugees to seek asylum.

Harlingen is the only INS district in the country that prohibits refugees from continuing their journey north without paying a bond of \$3,000 or more, effectively turning the entire Valley into a *de facto* detention camp. With the Gulf of Mexico to the east and the Mexican border running diagonally to the west, the Valley is cut off from the rest of the country like a slice of pie. Only two highways lead north, and both are heavily guarded by Border Patrol agents.

At the top of the Valley sits the huge King Ranch, its miles of rough terrain deterring almost anyone who tries to skirt INS checkpoints on foot.

At any given moment, several thousand refugees are detained in the Valley, jobless and homeless, awaiting asylum hearings. Another 400 to 500 are held on bonds as high as \$10,000 in *el corralon* — the big corral, the nation's largest INS detention center located 30 miles from Harlingen.

Despite the obstacles to asylum, U.S.-sponsored wars and unrelenting poverty continue to flood the Valley with refugees. In the last five years, Border Patrol agents have arrested more than 50,000 Latin Americans, not counting Mexicans. Officials estimate that another 100,000 have slipped through undetected, and some observers put the figure at more than 200,000.

Such numbers are startling, particularly when compared to the population of Central America. Today there are nearly one million Salvadorans in the U.S. — more than one-tenth of the population of El Salvador. Each year, those refugees send back more money to their families than their entire country produces in a year. Nicaraguans in the U.S. number roughly 225,000, with an average of 250 new arrivals each week. The Guatemalan refugee population has now reached 160,000.

## IT'S A JOB

Entering the Valley, refugees find a poverty far removed from their image of American wealth. The seven-county area has been dubbed "the new Appalachia." It is the poorest region in the nation, with per capita income of \$6,000 and unemployment as high as 50 per cent in the rural slums known as *las colonias*.

One of the better-paying and more popular jobs around is as a Border Patrol agent. Local Mexican-American residents, desperate for work, line up for jobs as border cops, even though it may mean deporting a friend or relative.

Even the chief of the Border Patrol is Hispanic. Silvestre Reyes, a native of El Paso, seems to be on the local news every other night calling the bedraggled refugees "illegal aliens" and saying they pose a threat to "national security."

"We're facing a multifaceted problem in terms of controlling our border," Reyes says. "There's an increase in alien smuggling, narcotics trade, and arms smuggling. The border

today is one of the most dangerous areas in the country."

Reyes and INS District Director Omer "Jerry" Sewell hit heavy on the "economic refugee" theme, telling local residents that Central Americans have come to take away their jobs. In late July, for example, the INS started a hotline so local residents could report employers believed to be hiring undocumented workers. Both of the TV stations in the Valley interviewed the crew-cutted Sewell about the hotline as he sat behind his desk, a huge Statue of Liberty adorning one corner. One station then cut to "Yolanda," a local resident who blamed her joblessness on refugees who work for less than minimum wage. The other station switched to a shot of two local residents standing outside the unemployment office.

"There's not enough work for everybody," explains Jesus Moya, leader of the International Union of Agricultural and Industrial Workers. "The farmworkers feel Central Americans are taking their jobs. But it's only because they are misinformed. You can count on one hand the number of Central Americans working agriculture down here."

In reality, the INS itself has created and fueled the tension between residents and refugees. After all, the only reason Central Americans have been forced to seek work in the Valley over the last three years is because the INS has forbidden them to leave the area without posting exorbitant bonds.

Sewell says the bonds are an effort to reduce the number of refugees who fail to show up for their deportation hearings.

## "The Only Refugee Camp in the United States"

By Luz Guerra

In 1979, when large numbers of Central Americans first began crossing the Texas border, there were no shelters, no sanctuary houses, no legal offices to meet the needs of those who found themselves detained in the Valley for months. One of the earliest responses to the crisis was El Refugio del Rio Grande, the first and only refugee camp in the United States.

Built on several acres of donated land near Harlingen, El Refugio is designed to do more than simply provide emergency services to refugees — it strives to organize and empower them. The daily life of the camp is totally governed by the refugees who live there, and residents grow and prepare their own food.

"The idea of El Refugio has been around since at least 1982," says Lisa Brodyaga, one of the camp's founders. "This was prior to the founding of Casa Oscar Romero, and there was a need for a place where Central American refugees could stay while their cases with INS were pending. We also felt there was a need for a platform from which the refugees could speak on their experiences — what does it mean to be a refugee, why are they here, why are

they being treated as criminals by the INS?"

Such an openly political approach is not easy in the Valley, where even those who simply offer legal advice, shelter, or medical assistance to refugees have come under fire. Still, after almost three years as a non-profit organization, El Refugio is fairly well established in the Valley. The camp is usually home to about 40 refugees, most of whom stay for six to eight weeks. All residents belong to the General Assembly, which determines how people will be admitted to El Refugio, what work needs to be done, and how tasks will be assigned. The Assembly is also responsible for maintaining order, ensuring the health and welfare of all residents, and overseeing agricultural planning.

Agriculture is the backbone of plans for self-sufficiency, but staff members acknowledge they still have a long way to go to realize their dream. The rapid turnover of residents makes it hard to maintain a steady work schedule, and it takes *campesinos* from El Salvador and Honduras time to adjust their crop calendars to fit the South Texas seasons. Staff members are currently working with residents to systematize agricultural tasks so they can be easily transferred as new people join the camp.

Plans for a cooperative system of production also ran into obstacles at El Refugio. Many residents were reluctant to join cooperatives, having escaped

But Linda Yanez, a Brownsville immigration attorney, calls the bond policy an "orchestrated attempt to turn locals against the refugees."

## NO WAY OUT

Some refugees, unable to find work and post bond, pay human smugglers known as "coyotes" to get them to Houston. Daisy Hernandez got by the checkpoint on a bus in 1986 during one of the rare moments it was closed. The 29-year-old Salvadoran worked as a housekeeper in Houston, supporting herself and sending money to her husband and child in San Miguel. One day, she received a telegram saying her daughter was sick with the measles.

from countries where government authorities consider co-ops a subversive activity. Now leaders at the camp have begun to organize a chicken coop, carpentry shop and other small income-producing projects that can be taken on by individuals.

When such obstacles are overcome and El Refugio is fully self-sufficient and self-governed, the International Indian Treaty Council — a native American organization with official observer status at the United Nations — has agreed to ask the U.N. to investigate the treatment of Central American refugees in the Valley and formally recognize El Refugio as a refugee camp. Such a move is especially important since the United States refuses to recognize the Central Americans as refugees.

In the meantime, though, Brodyaga and others say that to realize the dream of a democratic, self-governing and self-sufficient community, each new obstacle must be tackled as a lesson to be learned and incorporated into the long-term vision of El Refugio.

"If a problem arises," Brodyaga says, "we try to both solve that problem and establish a new process or procedure for dealing with similar problems as they may arise in the future. For the Central American

Daysi returned home immediately. "In my country, many children die from measles," she explained. "I was very worried because my only other child, a son, died in 1980 from parasites and malnutrition. He was in the hospital in San Miguel getting oxygen when the power went out and he died. His stomach was full of blood."

After her daughter recovered, the entire family returned to Texas to escape the U.S.-financed bombings in San Miguel. This time, however, the Border Patrol arrested the family shortly after they crossed the river and forbid them to



REFUGEES WORK TO CLEAR A FIELD AT EL REFUGIO DEL RIO GRANDE.

refugees who live at Refugio — many of whom have never experienced self-government or a working democracy — it is a learning process we hope will bear fruit later in their lives, whether that be here in the United States or when they return home."

*Luz Guerra is an activist and organizer in Austin, Texas. She has worked nationally for the past three years as an educator and researcher focusing on Central America and Central American refugees.*

leave unless they each paid a \$3,000 bond. Daysi and her family were prisoners of the Valley.

Destitute, the family wandered the streets of Brownsville for 10 days, begging money and sleeping in the street until a sympathetic local minister saw them and directed them to Proyecto Libertad. There they learned about Refugio del Rio Grande, a refugee camp started by Brodyaga about eight miles from Harlingen. [See sidebar, page 20.]

Told their asylum would take months to settle, Daysi's husband evaded the checkpoint and headed for Los Angeles to look for work. Daysi and her daughter boarded a bus for Houston.

"When we got to the checkpoint, I was asleep with the child in my arms," Daysi said. "A Border Patrol officer came on the bus and pinched me to wake me. He was a tall, white Anglo. He pinched me so hard, it cut me on the knuckle of my little finger. He told me to wake up and to get down off the bus. I didn't want to; I was desperate. I felt I had to get out of the Valley."

The Border Patrol returned Daysi and her daughter to Brownsville, where they stayed with friends and looked for a job. "First one friend, then another, until I find work," Daysi said. "Someone will hire me soon, don't you think?"

## A HOUSE DIVIDED

The three private refugee shelters in the Valley no longer have room for all the refugees like Daysi. Together, the shelters hold no more than 450 — and the growing number of refugees on the streets only increases the tension between native Southerners and newcomers.

"The more people roam around, the more local people say, 'There are all those refugees stealing and vandalizing,'" says Father Lenny DePasquale, until recently the refugee chaplain for the local Catholic diocese. "It contributes to the mistrust local people have for refugees."

The diocese runs Casa Oscar Romero, a refugee shelter that made national headlines in 1984 when federal agents arrested its director and a volunteer for helping Central American

refugees leave the Valley. But despite the negative publicity, neighbors didn't begin complaining about the shelter until the new bond policy went into effect, causing extreme overcrowding and prompting fears of vandalism.

Sensationalized press accounts and self-serving politicians fueled the dispute in the neighborhood until the entire town turned on Casa Romero. Pressured by the community and overwhelmed by more than 500 refugees at a facility built to hold one-tenth that number, diocese officials closed the shelter and left the homeless refugees on the steps of the INS office in Harlingen. The INS promptly imprisoned 200 refugees at its detention center.

The INS couldn't have asked for a better media event if it had planned one

diocese put a group of apolitical nuns in charge of the house and emphasized the humanitarian aspect of the shelter. The new philosophy seems to have mollified residents. Neighbors now express quiet support for the Casa; about 250 attended an opening mass last year. United We Stand, after its headline-grabbing debut, faded into an occasional letter to the editor.

### PROJECT LIBERTY

Perched on a wobbly stool behind a desk overflowing with files of refugee clients, Proyecto Libertad paralegal Jim Cushman answers the phone for perhaps the hundredth time today. "Con quien desea hablar?" he asks. "With whom do you wish to speak?"

bulges with dozens of affidavits in which refugees attest to being verbally, physically, and mentally abused by guards.

Included is the case of Jesus de la Paz Andrade, a 29-year-old Salvadoran detained in January 1986. Peace workers touring the detention center discovered de la Paz in the infirmary, moaning and breathing heavily. Asked if a doctor had examined the refugee, a guard claimed de la Paz's only problem was that "he hyperventilates and likes attention."

Eventually, Cushman was able to obtain medical records which showed de la Paz was suffering severe kidney failure complicated by his journey on foot through Mexico, where he ate and drank almost nothing. Proyecto convinced the INS to reduce his bond to \$1,000, raised money to pay for his release, accompanied him to Houston, and helped him get on a kidney dialysis program.

De la Paz lived with a cousin in Houston, barely getting by. Earlier this year, he was hit by a car and killed on his way for dialysis.

### CASE CLOSED

On the sixth floor of the First Republic Bank building, the tallest in Harlingen, Judge Howard Achtsam prepares to dispense his form of justice. The sterile hearing room is empty except for Proyecto lawyer Steve Jahn, INS attorney Grace Garza, a handful of Proyecto workers and friends, and the two refugees whose futures are at stake today — Maria and Antonio (not their real names), a young Salvadoran couple seeking political asylum.

Proyecto fights a losing battle at such hearings. Of the hundreds of asylum claims the center has filed for Central Americans in eight years, it has won only four. But Jahn is hopeful today; Antonio has perhaps the best case he has ever prepared.

Antonio, 29, has been active in opposition politics in his country since the age of 12. Many of his family and friends have been killed by government soldiers. Antonio delivered mail and vehicles to rebels fighting the Salvadoran government for six years, but he was forced to flee the country in 1986 when soldiers captured two of his co-workers and began looking for him. The



A SOCCER FIELD OUTSIDE HARLINGEN, TEXAS. TODAY OVER A MILLION CENTRAL AMERICANS LIVE IN THE UNITED STATES.

itself. Today, many local residents still associate the word "refugee" with Casa Romero. When the diocese opened a new Casa outside Brownsville in 1987, a citizens group calling itself "United We Stand" distributed anti-Casa bumper stickers, sued the diocese for sheltering refugees, and erected a 30-foot, three-tiered surveillance tower in a vacant lot behind Casa to watch for "subversive movements."

The orchestrated opposition had a serious side effect — it squelched the shelter's outspoken criticism of U.S. foreign policy in Central America. The

Jaime, as the 33-year-old is known to the refugees, says many are forced to return to war and hunger in Central America because the new immigration law passed in 1986 makes it tougher for them to find work and post bond. Cushman estimates that as many as half of Proyecto's clients eventually accept deportation even if they have strong asylum claims rather than face months behind bars.

Cushman has spent his six years as a paralegal documenting abuses by guards at the INS detention center known as *el corralon*. A folder he keeps in the office





**THE MIRANDA FAMILY, LIKE THOUSANDS OF OTHERS WHO HAVE FLED EL SALVADOR IN SEARCH OF FREEDOM, FOUND THEMSELVES DETAINED BY THE BORDER PATROL IN SOUTH TEXAS.**

co-workers never reappeared.

Antonio's testimony stretched over more than a dozen afternoons. He said he fears he will be killed if he returns to El Salvador, and asked for political asylum.

After summarizing Antonio's testimony and characterizing him as an honest and forthright witness, Judge Achtsam calmly denied his asylum plea. A gasp of incredulity arose from the spectators. Achtsam explained his decision: Antonio was not being threatened because of his political opinions. It is a crime in El Salvador to oppose the government; thus, Antonio is

a criminal, and the government there has a right to hunt him down and punish him accordingly. The fact that the government systematically tortures and assassinates political dissenters is irrelevant. Case closed.

"I couldn't help but feel that Joe McCarthy had returned to life as an immigration judge," Jahn said. "Achtsam's decision basically says that a government has the right to persecute, torture, and even kill political dissenters."

Proyecto will appeal the case to the equally conservative Board of Immigration Appeals, a process that could

take years. In the meantime, Antonio joins the thousands of Salvadoran refugees who have been denied asylum in blatant disregard of the 1980 Refugee Act, which offers safe haven to anyone persecuted for their political beliefs.

Although refugees from many countries are stopped at the border and detained in the Valley, statistics reveal that those fleeing U.S.-supported governments are less likely to win asylum. For instance, less than four percent of all refugees fleeing the "democracies" of El Salvador and Guatemala received asylum last year, compared to nearly 84 percent of refugees fleeing the "Marxist Sandinista regime" in Nicaragua. Last year, Attorney General Ed Meese also ordered the INS to let Nicaraguan refugees work and travel while their asylum cases are pending.

Yet the refugees continue to come. Indeed, three years after Ronald Reagan warned Americans that Harlingen is just a two-day drive from Managua, the only Central Americans to invade South Texas have been the hundreds of thousands of refugees driven here by U.S. foreign policy.

Although the immigration policies have succeeded in making life tough for Central American newcomers, forcing them to choose between starvation and political harassment in the Valley and starvation and political harassment back home, many eventually manage to escape the Valley and evade deportation, at least temporarily.

Ovidio, the Salvadoran *campesino* in the Proyecto Libertad waiting room, received permission to travel to New York and stay with a friend while his asylum application was being processed. Angela, the Guatemalan mother, had her family's case transferred to Los Angeles and took a bus to join relatives there. The Salvadoran children and their uncles also managed to join their relatives in Canada after more than six months of legal hassles.

Such determination lies at the heart of what is happening in the Valley. In devising its get-tough immigration policies, it seems, the Reagan administration overlooked a critical point — if the U.S.-supported wars in Central America don't stop, the flow of refugees won't either. □

*Jane Juffer, an associate editor of the Pacific News Service, lived and worked in South Texas for two years.*



# Invisible City

Nearly 100,000 Salvadorans live in the shadows of Houston.

By Louis Dubose

**H**OUSTON, TEXAS—Driving west, away from the city, fragments of architect Philip Johnson's post-modern skyline appear then disappear in the rearview mirror. To the right is the Greenway Plaza office park, austere architectural modernism at its narcissistic worst—distorted images of one glass tower reflected on the sides of another—and another. On the left, the odd geometry of the *Houston Post* building, designed, according to the city's finest architect, Howard Barnstone, to be appreciated at a passing glance at 50 miles an hour. Then, on the right and in the distance, before the freeway frontage completely gives way to car dealerships and strip development, the Transco Tower—the huge vertical art-deco shaft that dominates the city's southwest skyline.

At 50 miles an hour, or at the painfully slow pace by which most commuters make their ways toward the predomi-

nantly white, tract-house suburbs that encircle the city, few recognize, even after the freeway bends from west to southwest, that they have just passed through one of the largest Central American communities in the South. A community they might discover, if only they would turn south at the Bellaire exit and continue some 10 blocks to the sprawling, corporate-owned Central American *mercado* at the corner of Bellaire and Hillcroft.

The huge Fiesta market anchors the city's new Hispanic community, here in the heart of what 10 years ago was white middle-class Houston. The neighborhood is a small Hispanic town all clustered around and in the market, which includes a bank, a dentist's office, an optician, a travel agency, and a Western Union office where money orders and *giros*—money wired to foreign countries—are among the most requested services.

In the parking lot, on spaces rented from the Fiesta market chain, are a dozen



*estanquillos*—booths where vendors sell cheap clothing, leather goods, furniture, jam-boxes, cassette tapes, and cheap art. (On this particular afternoon, a recumbent Marilyn Monroe hangs framed above *The Last Supper*.) A *Reparacion de Calzado*—shoe repair—stands across the street from the Clinica del Sol medical center. A half-block to the north is *La Caseta*—a long distance phone center with private booths and bilingual operators. Here there is everything, more than a consumer would ever find in the center of San Salvador.

Although there are an estimated 100,000 Salvadorans living in Houston today, the crowded market offers the only clear evidence of their growing numbers. "If you don't go to Fiesta, you won't see them," said Richard Grimes, a professor of public health at the University of Texas. "They're an invisible population; most of Houston doesn't know that they're here."

## ADIOS, SINGLES SCENE

Last year, Grimes directed two graduate students, Ximena Urrutria-Rojas and Melvin Prado, who conducted a door-to-door survey to determine public health needs in southwest Houston. What they documented is as rapid a demographic change as has ever occurred in a Houston neighborhood. In a matter of four to five years, this corner of southwest Houston has become a small Central American city. According to the study, 13,500 Hispanics live within the one square mile



PINATAS OVERLOOK THE CHECKOUT LANES AT THE FIESTA MARKET, A SPRAWLING CENTRAL AMERICAN SHOPPING CENTER IN HOUSTON.

surveyed — and 36 percent of that number is Salvadoran.

The survey also confirmed what the management of the Fiesta chain already realized: the Central American newcomers are not young, single men looking for casual work. According to Grimes, 55 percent of the population is male, 45 percent is female. “Twenty percent of this group,” Grimes said, “are American citizens.” Children born to parents living in exile.

There is, in all of this, an odd demographic irony. These two-story brick-veneer apartments, built 25 years ago around small courtyards and swimming pools, were never intended for the Salvadoran, Mexican, Guatemalan, and Honduran children who spill out of the yellow Houston Independent School District buses at the end of each weekday, then scramble for the access-gates at places like Colonial Gardens, Lion’s Gate, Clarewood Gardens, and Renwick and Trafalgar Squares. Nor were they intended for the few black families who are also changing the character of what was previously an almost exclusively white neighborhood.

“In 1980, this neighborhood was hot,” one apartment manager said. “It was Houston’s singles scene where most of the young people who used to work for the oil companies lived. Then, in 1982, the bottom fell out and the vacancy rate went out of sight.”

According to Jim Sandford, who directs an apartment owners association, most of the vacated apartments became

properties of the banks and lending institutions that had financed them. “The banks demanded that they fill the apartments to bring in some money,” Sandford said. “So rents went down and there were no more credit checks.”

At the same time, other demographic pressures were at work in Central America, particularly El Salvador. “In 1981, the war got very hard,” said one young man from the Department of Morazan. “I was in Los Angeles and I tried to return to help my family. When I couldn’t even get into the country, I came here. My parents got out of El Salvador, too.”

“My family measures our time here by the years of the Reagan Administration,” said a young woman from the El Salvador’s Department of Usulután. “In 1981, my mother and father came to Brownsville. Then they moved to Houston. In 1983 I came to Los Angeles, the only place the *coyote* would take me. Then, by plane, I came to Houston. Later my sister and brothers came.”

If her citizenship papers had been completed in time for the presidential election, the young woman added, she would have voted for Michael Dukakis. Only her parents still talk of someday returning to El Salvador, where they once owned a small business.

Most agree with the young woman. At Holy Ghost Church, a dozen women have gathered to receive clothing provided through the parish and Casa Juan Diego, a shelter for Central Americans. Most are mothers under 20. I asked the same question of all of them: “Were the war to end

and the economy to improve, would you return to your home?” One woman defined the consensus. “*Si, pero no mas pa’ ir y regresar.*” Yes, but only to go and to return.

Most will never go. Unless, that is, they are apprehended by the INS and deported. For many, the marginal lives they live here are better than anything they have ever known in their homeland. And there are children. But Houston’s depressed economy, and the new federal sanctions against em-

ployers who hire undocumented workers, assure that many will continue to live at the margin.

## OUT OF THE SHADOWS

As more and more Salvadorans settle in southwest Houston, some are beginning to organize. “It’s time to start thinking in terms of empowerment,” said Mark Zwick, founder of Casa Juan Diego. Zwick, who is working with community members to organize an empowerment project, argues that improvements in living conditions will have to come from within the community, from below — a fundamental precept of the religious activist movement known as liberation theology. “Knowledge is power,” Zwick said, “and that is where we will begin.”

The empowerment project will address tenant-landlord relations, workers’ rights, fundamental legal protections, and problems with schools, the post office, and the police. It is one of several grassroots movements developing in the Salvadoran community.

Others take as their model the *comunidades de base* or “base communities” that have reinvented the Catholic Church in Latin America. At Holy Ghost Parish, a “scripture sharing” group meets to discuss how the Bible applies in a practical way to day-to-day life. At nearby St. Anne’s, a Catholic parish once so chic and wealthy that its parishioners almost considered themselves Episcopalians, a 30-year-old Salvadoran woman described a similar group she helped organize:

"We study the Word of God . . . to reestablish our identity, to recapture our dignity. Living like this, without work, without documents . . . we don't even know who we are. In Salvador, I worked in a religious community. Here it is important, too. If we use the scripture and our discussion, maybe we can come out of the shadows."

"It's not easy," said Tom Picton, a priest at Holy Ghost. "There is no political power because there is no political base, no bloc of voters."

Cesar, a Salvadoran who works for a sanctuary and relief organization in Houston, agrees. "When I lived in New York," he said in perfect English, "there was some political organizing and working for political rights. But here, there is not so much of this." An articulate, almost full-time activist whose immediate family is safe in Europe, Cesar said that he spends much of his time providing basic needs like beds, food, and assistance with immigration problems. On the day we spoke, the INS raided an informal labor pool on the street corner near Casa Bill Woods, where Cesar works.

"The city is only beginning to realize that they are out there," Lois O'Connor said of the Central Americans. O'Connor, who works for Houston City Councilman John Goodner, said she was surprised when a recent request for a part-time, city-funded clinic in the district was approved. "I'm used to being told no," O'Connor said. Goodner's office, according to O'Connor, has also persuaded the city administration to locate a federal children's nutrition office in the district. And a storefront police station is also in the works to deal with the increase in violent crime in the past two years.

According to Richard Grimes, who lives in southwest Houston, much of the crime came with the employer sanctions in the immigration reform law. "There was no prostitution until other legitimate sources of employment were cut off," he said. "Now you can find prostitutes in the community — and drug dealing."

Zwick said that at Casa Juan Diego there are now more signs of families in stress, "domestic crises, alcoholism, battered women." The shelter, which was established to house homeless men, now operates a program for battered women. And Carecen, a local legal services

organization, recently hired a counselor to assist traumatized families, particularly women.

## NO OFFICES

Domestic crises result, in part, from an odd distribution of labor among Central American families. While men spend mornings at informal corner labor pools looking for casual work, many women, who can always find domestic work, leave their families each night to clean the huge office towers where the city earns its living.

"The [office] work is very hard and degrading," said a young woman who had started medical school just when the uni-



EVERY MORNING, RAIN OR SHINE, DOZENS OF CENTRAL AMERICAN REFUGEES WAIT OUTSIDE THE HOUSTON INS OFFICE SEEKING ASYLUM.

versity in San Salvador was closed by the government. "What they demand of the women and the way they are treated is not fair. And some women take drugs to stay awake." She now cleans houses every day. "But no offices," she said.

Although the swelling number of Salvadorans is altering the demographic landscape of the city, Central American residents are largely ignored in the official business of the city and county. Local political campaigns in the district are conducted entirely in English. And though Houston Mayor Katherine Withmire has worked to build inroads into the large and

politically active Asian community, no elected leader has connected with the large Central American community.

O'Connor expects it will take another generation before Central Americans have a voice in local politics, but others disagree. "A large number of Central Americans are residents now," said Frances Tobin, a local immigration attorney. "And in five years many of them will be qualified to vote. That's when the biggest changes will come."

"Right now we have no community," a 60-year-old Salvadoran man said. "What we have is *una red* — a network — to get help and help each other."

In El Salvador, this man and his family operated a small business. Here in Houston, everyone in the family either works or studies. In eight years, they have moved from the Casa Juan Diego into an apartment, then into the three-bedroom tract home where they now live in southwest Houston. When he is not working — either as a carpenter or mechanic — this former shopkeeper and his wife do volunteer work in the Salvadoran "network." One son is married and in another state. One daughter has organized and teaches a Central American group at a Catholic church. Another hopes to resume her medical studies here some day. For now, she cleans houses every day. "But no offices."

Southwest Houston is no one's community. Like Los Angeles, it is an urban *place*, a place designed to accommodate the two-car family. So now, at night, when most families have returned to their apartments, the parking areas remain mostly empty — of cars, that is. They are often filled with shopping carts. This is, after all, the first pedestrian culture that southwest Houston has known. Women here navigate shopping carts loaded with children, groceries, and clothing through residential streets and thoroughfares where no one ever anticipated the need for sidewalks. And in the city where Howard Barnstone reinvented residential architecture to accommodate the automobile, distances between homes and schools and stores often seem immense.

So while in the inner city the shopping cart has become the symbol of the nation's homeless, here it has come to represent something else: the newly-arrived immigrant. □

Louis Dubose is associate editor of The Texas Observer.



# La Victoria en Virginia

By Dee Reid

Salsa music fills the air. A tortilla truck makes its deliveries. Families gather to share a potluck supper of their favorite Latin American dishes. And everyone converses in Spanish.

The time is 1986. Although it has the feel of a bustling Central American village, the setting is Lee Gardens, then the largest low-income apartment complex in Arlington, Virginia.

Two years ago, 87 percent of the estimated 3,000 inhabitants of these 1940s garden apartments were Hispanic, most of them recent refugees from Central America. Today the demographics have changed considerably: The 960-unit complex has been sold to a Maryland developer and is being renovated and rented to more upscale North Americans. Most of the Latinos have been evicted and have moved on — some back to their homelands, many more to shabbier homes and apartments in the outer suburbs. Although many have jobs in nearby restaurants and hotels, they can't afford metropolitan-area rents on wages of less than \$5 an hour.

But thanks to an unusual alliance of Hispanic tenants and local civic leaders in this Southern suburb of Washington, D.C., more than a third of the newly upgraded apartments have been set aside for low-to-moderate income households. As a result, rent subsidies will allow 200 impoverished families — about 135 of them

Latinos — to live in comfortable modernized apartments and remain in this close-knit complex. Eventually, another 164 units will also be available at lower-than-market rates.

"I feel so at home here," says Juliete Nelson, former president of the Lee Gardens Tenants Association, who moved to the area from Panama in 1982. She faced eviction until the tenants group organized and convinced the Arlington Housing Corporation to buy back 38 percent of the units from the developers and make them available at affordable rates.

"It's not just because of the Hispanic population," says Nelson. "The whole complex lives like a community, not like strangers. It's like an extended family. I've learned that you just have to get involved in the community in which you live."

Today the rent-subsidized units are



Photos by Craig Herndon, *The Washington Post*

identical to the other apartments in the renovated complex, except they do not come with dishwashers, washers, and dryers. "These are the nicest subsidized units I have seen in Arlington County," says Judith Arandes, a Puerto Rican





# The Dictator's Tomb

By Guillermo Cortes Dominguez  
Translated by Alice Nelson

**I**n late 1985, the Nicaraguan newspaper *Barricada* sent writer Guillermo Cortes Dominguez to Miami to report on the community of contras and other Somocistas—the guards and officials of dictator Anastasio Somoza—who had fled to the United States when Somoza was overthrown in 1979. Miami is the center of the Nicaraguan exile community; an estimated 100,000 Nicaraguans live in the city. Most are refugees from a country devastated by war, but Miami also serves as the headquarters for the contras and relatives of Somoza eager to return to power.

Cortes turned in a week-long series, beginning his tale at the tomb of Somoza. The excerpts below represent the first English translation of Cortes' work.

**MIAMI, FLA.** — The king of the mis-asma was right there, under my feet, worm-eaten, inevitably decayed. The

almighty god of Nicaragua's darkness doesn't rest in peace in this, the largest cemetery in Miami. He is simply dead.

The burial plot in Miami was already bought, but his family members did not decide until the last minute to bury him here; they hurriedly had a square, white mausoleum built, like some of those in

Managua's General Cemetery.

The remains of his blown-apart body were brought here from Paraguay and were carefully watched over in a mortuary called "The Gentlemen," a name whose delicate irony seemed to take one final jab at the tyrant.

Svelte ex-soldiers, showing off their gala uniforms, silently stood guard at the entrance to the chapel. Somoza was dead and his family

was afraid. The Nicaraguan guards let no stranger in.

Some Cubans own the funeral home, and the cemetery is located on 8th Street, in the anti-communist sector of Miami known as "Little Havana." Several Cu-

bans attended the wake, including various members of Assault Brigade 2506, humiliated at the Bay of Pigs, along with the owners of the anti-revolutionary radio station WQBA, "*La Cubanísima*," the contras' principal means of propaganda in this city.

Only a few months before the overthrow of the dictatorship, representatives from both the brigade and the radio station had been in Managua to express their support to the trapped tyrant.

## DAY OF THE DEAD

Nothing suggests that the tomb might be his. It could only have occurred to my companion to bring me to this cemetery at night, and precisely on Halloween, the eve of *El Día de los Muertos*—All Souls Day, or literally, the Day of the Dead.

Among the fenced-in plots, tombstones, images, shadows, crosses, and a timid moon veiled by black clouds, we quickly stole across the cemetery until we arrived trembling at his unmarked tomb. And he was frightening even in the grave. I foolishly thought he might arise from the dead.

We crossed the grass surrounding the mausoleum and descended to the crypt, nervously supporting our feet on those cold and eternal stairs that took us to the vault.

I don't know if there was any light or if it was my sinister companion's flashlight that permitted us to orient ourselves, now inside, alone with "the General."

He lay to the left of the stairs, in an encrusted drawer in the wall. There he was, magnificently dead.

As if chased by his shadow, we ran, terrified, out of that cursed cemetery.

## THE RETURN

The wife of a former soldier told me that one of Somoza's personal aides, Colonel Victoriano Lara, is buried in the white mausoleum, right beside the tyrant. Anastasio Somoza Portocarrero, the son of the dictator, commented that Lara and his father would be together "until we



return" to power in Nicaragua. And he wasn't kidding.

That is the golden dream of the Somocistas. "The Return" is a fixation, an obsession. Their parties, their gatherings, and even informal conversations are unavoidably charged with their nostalgia for power. They even invent *pinata* parties for the kids, but those serve as pretexts to get together, to see each other, and to chew the fat about their memories. The Return is more than an aim, more than a goal, it is almost a diseased sentiment.

Their conversations are always the same. They talk about what they were, about their privileges, their power, and they even brag morbidly about the tortures and assassinations that they committed. After a few drinks, they elaborate their ideas of what they'll do to the Sandinistas when they return to Nicaragua. Although the top Sandinista leaders occupy a special place in their meditations, they basically think about killing everything that even "smells" Sandinista.

When they're more "toasted," they brag even more and imagine themselves victorious in combat, conquering city after city, the siege of Managua, and finally their glorious entrance to the capital. They dream of celebrating The Return at Los Ranchos Restaurant.

They also speak of revenge. A bloody orgy is anchored in their brains. I don't know if they are aware of just how many

Nicaraguans participated in the Revolution. Carrying out their desire for revenge, then, would mean assassinating hundreds of thousands of people.

The guards still salute each other militarily at their gatherings. They call each other *Commandante*. They raise their hands to their foreheads, accompanying the gesture by clicking their heels. If someone doesn't show on time for an appointment, another will phone him up, saying: "*Commandante*, you're wanted at Headquarters. Report immediately or you will be restricted for six months. Bring all the grenades — beers — that you can."

The old bloody stories that the guards never get tired of repeating now mesh with the new "feats" recounted by the

"freedom fighters" who occasionally come from Honduras to rest on Miami's paradisiacal beaches. A sort of "vacation program" exists for "well-behaved guards," coordinated in Tegucigalpa, so that there are seasons in which Miami Beach fills with Somocistas who, after "resting up," return to their bases along the Honduran border with Nicaragua.

On July 17, 1979, the day the dictator and his closest aides arrived at Miami Airport, he told them that they would stay for a few weeks, six months at the most. That promise is still a bitter memory for ex-Colonel Luis Alberto Luna, the jour-



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nalist's terror, who had casually ordered the termination of the radio news program where I began my career as a reporter.

A Cadillac awaited the tyrant at the airport, while the rest of the guards and officials took a bus. "We cry a little," Luna later confessed to a journalist from the *Miami News*. After several years of repairing radios, of trying unsuccessfully to sell real estate, and of working in a printing shop, Luna finally arrived at a brilliant conclusion: "I lost my paradise."

#### FIVE-STAR SERVICE

The Return is like an illness manifested in multiple forms, as illustrated by

the "prologue" of the menu at the exclusive Los Ranchos Restaurant, owned by Somoza's nephew Luis: "Every aspect of our restaurant, from its ambience to its decor, steep us in an atmosphere of nostalgia for our land..." Ministers, vice-ministers, and other high-ranking officials meet here to build "castles in the air."

Behind Los Ranchos, located at 125 Southwest 107 Avenue in the Commercial Center of Sweetwater, there is another restaurant called "El Taquito," for the "less important" soldiers. There they have hung up a map to follow the supposed military operations of the contras with arrows, colors, and indicators. According to those carefully marked movements, the Somocistas are on the edge of taking over Nicaragua.

With a great deal of reserve, not to mention fear, I accepted an invitation from a Nicaraguan woman residing in Miami to eat dinner at Los Ranchos, where I saw Guillermo Rivas Cuadra, an infamous Somocista judge; to my surprise, he was working as a cashier.

The place is excellent, first class. It is an international five-star restaurant and the service is enviable. The waiters are super-efficient, friendly, and at times bothersome, because they seem to scrutinize you constantly. If you're going to light a cigarette,

one of them appears like an arrow with his lighter lit before you can even begin to light it yourself.

The personnel is Somocista, many of them former guards, particularly the waiters. An unavoidable question is how these assassins have managed to refine their manners and be so attentive and helpful. It was difficult to eat meat without thinking of all the people they had butchered in Nicaragua.

#### TRASH FOR HONDURAS

Both drug and arms traffic and personal ambitions divide Somocistas in Miami and Honduras. Corruption is so per-



vasive that nobody trusts anybody.

During these six and a half years, the corruption, intrigue, and crime that had reached the highest levels in Nicaragua under Somoza inevitably moved to Miami. The arms and drugs business, like the friction and open disputes that sometimes end in tragedy, are the order of the day.

They fight over the aid that the Reagan administration provides to the contras. The thirst for U.S. dollars, for power, are among their incurable evils.

Even the Somocista ex-colonels sarcastically admit that the majority of the funds and equipment destined for the contras in Honduras stays in Miami, filtered through an intricate web of banks, real estate offices, restaurants, supermarkets, and medical clinics. "We send the trash to Honduras," commented one of them. Contra leaders like ex-colonel Enrique Bermudez and Adolfo Calero would surely like to know his name.

Perhaps such leaders are the ones diverting a great part of the funds to bank accounts in various North American cities; the disloyal ex-colonel must have been irritated because his share is proportionately insignificant. But if his bosses realized that he is stealing their money, it wouldn't matter to him. He would be dead.

## PHONE WARS

When contra leaders first began arriving in Miami, the CIA gave them a secret telephone access code of 12 numbers to call people in Nicaragua who could give them daily information to use for propaganda. The agency's director William Casey could not have imagined that the move would provoke a scandal involving millions of dollars.

The access code spread like a plague. Somocistas gave it out to friends and relatives, or simply sold it to the highest bidder. Thus began an entire business.

"Telephonism" gripped the Somocista exiles. A previously unknown passion was born and developed in a few days, and the deluge of calls congested

international lines. The contras communicated day and night with Managua and other cities and incredibly, they would call China or Japan just to be able to use the "magic" number, even though they couldn't understand the person speaking on the other end of the line.

The codes were changed weekly, but the new number would spread in a few hours. The contras and their friends reportedly ran up an unauthorized phone bill of \$160 million.

The "telephone war" provoked a scandal. The CIA scolded the Somocistas and demanded complete discretion in their



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use of the card. Moreover, the number of authorized users was drastically reduced.

## GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

Outside of this communications fever, the Somocista exiles live their sleepy lives in apartment blocks and duplexes. Little by little, they continue to lose the powerful confidence they initially had of returning to Nicaragua "in six months," as the tyrant told them on the day they arrived in Miami in 1979.

Those six months have already become six years. The stolen money has dried up. The honorable ministers, generals, and other officials have really had to

work — even their wives, who care for children and old people. Others sell pork tamales, like the mother of Dinora Sampson, Somoza's mistress.

The Return not only projects itself in their gatherings and dreams, but also in other things: the Mercedes Benzes of the "big shots" have been exchanged for less pretentious vehicles, because here they can't afford the upkeep. But they haven't lost the last license plates extended by Somoza, and they put them on the very front of their now modest cars to make them feel at home.

Gone is the enthusiasm produced by the installation of training camps in the Everglade swamps outside of Miami. Somocista practices there were carnivalesque. Guards and civilians arrived with tents and thermoses, but there was more drinking than military exercises. The show, organized chiefly by Cuban anti-communists, attracted many unwary people who dished out respectable sums of U.S. dollars for the cause of "liberty."

But a little beyond this place, about 40 minutes from Miami, also within the Everglades, a comparable number of ex-Nicaraguan soldiers did train seriously. They were later shipped to Honduras.

So, after six and a half years, the helpless anguish of the Somocistas is giving way to a torturous resignation that only momentarily disappears with

a vibrant speech from Reagan against the Sandinistas, but returns like a painful boomerang with the disastrous military defeats of the new Somocista army, the contras.

On the outside of the tyrant's square, white mausoleum, on a small note hanging from a plastic flower, I read: "General, your beloved guard won't forget you."

The whole U.S.A. seems to be a mausoleum.

And Miami is like a gigantic tomb of Somoza. □

*Translated and reprinted by permission of Barricada.*



# The Death Squads in Houston

By Ross Gelbspan

**T**he young Salvadoran man was frantic. He had come to feel safe in Houston by the spring of 1987. But he was very worried about his mother, his sister, and his uncle in San Salvador.

Last March, he received a call from his mother. Members of a death squad had come to her home demanding to see his uncle. The uncle was away from home at the time. But the two death squad members were not deterred.

"Produce the man the next time we return, or we will kill you and your daughter," they told the mother. "Moreover, we are watching your son in Houston who works with a solidarity group as well. Neither you nor your daughter or son will live if you don't produce him for us."

With the coming to power of the Reagan administration in 1981, the political destinies of El Salvador and the United States became more closely intertwined than ever before. The most apparent impact of that relationship is visible in the

swelling population of illegal Salvadoran immigrants in the South. It was manifest, as well, in the controversy over the sanctuary movement which culminated last year in the conviction of 11 citizens who sheltered Salvadoran refugees entering the country illegally.

But beneath those visible demographic and legal changes, the close relationship also spawned a quiet outbreak of low intensity political warfare launched by the Reagan administration-supported Salvadoran right wing against political dissenters inside the United States.

Former FBI employees and other sources now indicate that the Salvadoran death squads have been operating in Houston and other Southern cities for several years. Financed in part by a handful of wealthy Salvadoran exiles in Southern Florida and California, highly secret, mobile teams of former Salvadoran soldiers and police are suspected in a rash of death threats, break-ins, and abductions stretching from Miami and Houston to the rest of the nation.

Sources familiar with the death squads also indicate that the FBI not only gave the Salvadoran military information on Salvadoran opponents being deported back to El Salvador, but also furnished information that may have helped the death squads target American citizens opposed to Reagan administration policies in El Salvador.

## EXPORTING CIVIL WAR

The U.S. operation of the death squads can be traced back to 1979, when five Salvadoran groups fighting the military and the privately organized death squads united under the umbrella of the FMLN. The Carter administration responded by installing a Christian Democratic ruling junta and initiating a series of economic and agricultural reforms to moderate the intolerable financial gap between the country's long-standing oligarchy and its impoverished land-based peasantry.

It was a solution that satisfied no one.

The Salvadoran left saw the move as a veiled initiative to sugarcoat U.S. support for an iron-fisted military government with superficial reforms.

The country's right wing saw the move as a diabolical plot by the CIA and State Department to impose instant socialism on El Salvador and, in the process, to wrest power from the handful of wealthy Salvadorans who had traditionally controlled the economy.

The subsequent reaction of both factions led to the export of the Salvadoran civil war into the U.S.

A tiny country of little economic or strategic importance to the U.S., El Salvador nevertheless became an obsession for William Casey, the incoming director of the Central Intelligence Agency in the Reagan administration. To Casey, El Salvador was a "textbook" conflict with the Soviet Union, and the most important symbol of the life-and-death battle between democracy and Marxism-Leninism.

In his recent book *Veil*, journalist Bob Woodward reported that information on Soviet military supplies being shipped to El Salvador painted "a paper picture of Communist global conspiracy that conformed with Casey's predisposition. The hands of the Soviet Union, Cuba, North Vietnam, Eastern Europe, and Nicaragua were all involved in directing a supply route aimed at El Salvador. The case was



**WORKERS IN EL SALVADOR EXHUME BODIES OF MARIO RIVERA, 16, AND FELIX RIVERA, 25, BELIEVED TORTURED AND KILLED BY THE DEATH SQUADS EARLIER THIS YEAR.**

To aid the investigation, the FBI established secret channels with the Salvadoran National Guard to exchange information on suspected communists who were heading north — either through the emerging sanctuary movement, or among the thousands of refugees crossing the Rio Grande to flee the exploding violence in their own country.

The concept behind the Texas-based CISPES investigation — which was part of a larger probe of Salvadoran terrorism — was to squeeze political opponents both in El Salvador and in the U.S.

As part of the arrangement, the FBI agreed to furnish the National Guard with information on asylum seekers who were being deported to El Salvador — and on CISPES and other activist groups in the United States.

#### **DATABASE AND DEATH THREATS**

In April 1981, the FBI sent a new FBI contract employee named Frank Varelli to El Salvador to establish a secret channel with the National Guard. Varelli, a naturalized American who had left El Salvador the previous year, was the perfect person for the job. His father, Agustin Martinez Varela, had been director of the Salvadoran Military Training Academy, director of the Salvadoran National Police, and the Minister of the Interior.

Varelli contacted Eugenio Vides Casanova, at the time director of the National Guard, who had been a student of his father at the military academy. Casanova agreed to cooperate with the FBI in a joint secret investigation aimed at undermining the left-wing opposition in El Salvador and monitoring the Salvadoran left's sources of political and financial support in North America.

When Varelli returned from El Salvador, he headed for the Dallas office of the FBI — headquarters for the Bureau's massive investigation of CISPES. He brought with him an intelligence windfall. Among the prizes was a database containing the names of hundreds of suspected and known left-wing opponents. It was compiled by Ansesal, a Salvadoran presidential police force, with the help of right-wing associates of Roberto D'Aubuisson, the alleged leader of the Salvadoran death squads.

almost as tight as a drum.”

Based on those findings, President Reagan signed a secret order in early March 1981 to provide propaganda and political and military support to the Christian Democrats and the armed forces of El Salvador.

The next month, apparently following the administration's new policy, the FBI began a massive, five-year investigation of U.S. groups opposed to the Salvadoran regime — most notably the newly born Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES).

Varelli also brought with him the text of a recent strategy speech by Roman Mayorga Quiroz, an official of the FDR, political allies of the armed Salvadoran opposition. The strategy of the FDR, Varelli showed the FBI, was to set up 180 solidarity groups in the U.S. to pressure the Reagan administration to abandon its policies of military aid and intervention.

Finally, Varelli brought one more piece of intelligence to the Bureau. He learned, while in El Salvador, that a small group of wealthy, highly influential Salvadoran leaders was planning to establish its own private intelligence gathering operation in the U.S. The group planned to monitor Salvadoran opponents in the States as well as to keep tabs on their North American political allies.

In other words, the chief bureau charged with enforcing federal law knew in advance that a powerful private group in a foreign country was planning to spy on American citizens inside the U.S.—and it decided to cooperate with the foreign spies.

Before long, the death squads were operating across the U.S. Death threats became commonplace. Since 1984, more than 100 break-ins have occurred at the homes and offices of Central American activists. While none of the burglaries has been solved, activists suspect the involvement of right-wing Central Americans in a substantial number of them.

*"To Marta Alicia, who was tortured and left for dead, and her terrorist comrades. For being a traitor to the country, you will die, together with your comrades. You survived in El Salvador. Here, with us, you will not. Do not speak in public."*

*The letter, which was delivered anonymously through a mail slot in the door of the Los Angeles office of CISPES in early July 1987, went on to list the names of 18 other members of the organization. It concluded: "No one will be saved. Death. Death. Flowers in the desert die."*

*The last phrase in the letter is particularly ominous. When death squads in El Salvador marked a political opponent, according to one source familiar with the operations of the squads, "They would leave flowers by the door and the next day the person would see them and know what it meant and many would leave the next day."*

*Over the next year, similar threats were received at refugee assistance cen-*

*ters, as well as CISPES offices, in Minneapolis, Washington, Boston, and Los Angeles.*

By the time the FBI investigation of CISPES was a year old, the private Salvadoran network in the U.S. was operating at full force. Bankrolled by a handful of wealthy Salvadoran exiles in South Florida and California, the operation made its headquarters in the South. It boasted a large Wang computer in Houston, which it used to surveil and monitor leftist Sal-



*"We are watching your son in Houston," the death squad told the mother. "Neither you nor your daughter or son will live if you don't produce your brother for us."*

vadorans who came to the U.S. to speak and meet with support groups—university professors, teachers, trade unionists, and officials of the FDR. The clandestine Salvadoran network also monitored a number of meetings of CISPES and other U.S. political groups involved in Central American issues.

For at least three years, the private Salvadoran group routinely provided information to the FBI. The Salvadorans felt that the Bureau, unlike the CIA or State Department, understood the real problems of the country and was not about to sell it out to what they saw as a socialist government headed by Jose Napoleon Duarte and the Christian Democrats.

The Salvadoran network also provided a fertile source for FBI recruits.

Among them, Varelli alleged, were two Salvadoran brothers who had been convicted of counterfeiting and gun smuggling in El Salvador. The brothers were identified in teletypes from the Miami FBI office as intelligence sources in the CISPES probe. Among other activities, the men infiltrated meetings at Florida State University in Tallahassee, which hosted left-leaning Salvadoran university officials.

In an interview last year, Varelli said the families who organized the private Salvadoran corps, which includes a number of former Salvadoran military and police personnel, are "totally frustrated" because "they can't get their message into newspapers and they can't buy air time on TV" to counter administration propaganda about the "so-called democracy" in El Salvador.

Noting the emergence in the U.S. of another death squad named the Domingo Monterrosa Command, Varelli warned of the possibility of guerrilla war in the U.S. "The death squad activity here won't be easy to stop," he said.

He speculated that the U.S.-based Salvadoran operation involved small cadres of from 30 to 100 Salvadorans in cities with large Salvadoran refugee populations, including Dallas, Houston, Miami, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Washington, D.C.

"They operate out of cities where they can easily blend in," he said, noting that the highly secret teams operate in units of two or three to be able to move about inconspicuously.

Varelli explained that the Salvadoran families who organized the terrorist squads were thoroughly frustrated with the Reagan administration for its support of Duarte. "They believe the CIA fixed the voting machines to assure Duarte's election," he said. "As a result, they decided to hit where it will hurt—here in America."

Varelli, who was one of two men in the FBI's Dallas office who coordinated the five-year probe of CISPES, said he met with several members of the Salvadoran network in 1985. "It was amazing," he concluded. "They knew as much about CISPES as the FBI did."

#### **"NONE OF OUR BUSINESS"**

The relationship between the U.S.-based Salvadoran operation and the FBI cooled somewhat in 1983 following an assassination attempt on a Miami-based official of the Duarte regime. The Bureau



Scribes  
→ donde y' como esta fu AITO

# AN ATTACK ON YANIRA IS AN ATTACK ON ALL OF US

THE DEATH THREAT SCRAWLED ON THIS FLIER DEPICTS A DECAPITATED CHILD AND READS: "DO YOU KNOW WHERE AND HOW YOUR SON IS?"

conducted a preliminary and, critics say, deliberately superficial investigation of right-wing Salvadoran elements in South Florida, and distanced itself from the clandestine group.

But the relationship between the FBI and the Salvadoran military continued unabated. And as always, much of the operation was based in the South.

In 1983, for example, Varelli traveled to Houston to arrange for the FBI to forward the names of Salvadoran deportees to the National Guard. He persuaded an employee of TACA, the Salvadoran airline, to provide passenger manifests to the Houston FBI office which, in turn, forwarded the names to the National Guard. The same employee subsequently arranged a job with TACA for an FBI agent who also had access to the passenger manifests.

Asked whether the deportees were killed or "disappeared" after they arrived in El Salvador, Varelli said, "We in the FBI actively did not want to know what happened to them. Our only concern was to get the information to the Guard. After that, it was none of our business."

Varelli added that the FBI also surreptitiously paid a Salvadoran Consulate official to provide names and passport information on American activists who applied for visas to travel to El Salvador. The information enabled the FBI to have the activists monitored in El Salvador.

In early July 1987, 23-year-old Yanira Corea, a volunteer at the CISPES chapter in Los Angeles, was driving to the airport with her three-year-old son when another car forced her onto the shoulder of the road. Two men jumped out and approached her car. One tried to pull her out. The other took a book which contained a small photo of her son. Corea

escaped, but her son was so disturbed he did not speak for three days.

Two weeks later, she received a letter with her son's photo. The letter bore the phrase: "Flowers in the desert die."

The following week, when Corea left the office of the medical firm where she worked, three men approached her and forced her into a waiting van. Two of the men, she said later, had Salvadoran accents. The third sounded like a Nicaraguan.

"They accused me of being a communist and a member of the FMLN. I knew they were death squad people. They asked about my brother. They wanted names of people who they said raise money for the FMLN. They wanted information about other members of CISPES."

The men drove Corea around Los Angeles for six hours, during which time they carved an E and an M—the initials for Escuadron de la Muerte—into the palms of her hands. They burned her with cigarettes. And they raped her with a stick. (The injuries were later confirmed by a doctor who treated her.)

Nor was that the end of her ordeal. Shortly after the attack, Corea moved into a new apartment with her mother and son. Two days after the move, she began to receive more death threats over her new, unlisted telephone.

Five months later, when she was planning to travel to New York for a speaking engagement, she received a copy of a flier with a handwritten Spanish phrase: "Do you know where your son is?" A line drawing on the note showed the torso of a decapitated child. A crudely drawn head lay nearby.

On one level, the death threats, break-ins, and abductions have generated complaints about the indifference of the FBI

and other law enforcement agencies. Following the abductions last year of Corea and another CISPES volunteer, Mark Rosenbaum of the American Civil Liberties Union said: "Neither the FBI nor the Los Angeles police have dug into the Central American right wing. There is lots of evidence of a very political character that can't be explained any other way. But the police and the FBI pretend it doesn't exist." A spokesman for the FBI responded that the Bureau can't investigate an entire group like right-wing Salvadorans without violating that group's civil liberties.

On another level, however, the clandestine Salvadoran operation has raised ominous fears about violations of the American political process. U.S. Representative Don Edwards (D-California), who last year held hearings on the break-ins, has expressed concern about the Salvadoran conflict being waged on American soil.

"From the outset, I have felt the break-ins may be the work of agents of one or more Central American governments representing the ruling classes in those countries," Edwards wrote last year. "Another possibility is that the break-ins are the work of right-wing groups who support the contras and U.S. policy in Central America."

Citing the activities of agents of the Shah of Iran and former Philippine leader Ferdinand Marcos, Edwards added: "We know that in the past, violent governments have sent their agents to the U.S. to harass and intimidate their opponents here.... Is history repeating itself?" □

Ross Gelbspan is a reporter for The Boston Globe.



# The War at Home

How the White House ran a covert operation to manipulate the media and lobby Southern congressmen who opposed the contras

By Peter Kornbluh

**T**he memo to the Pentagon was signed by the director of the Office of Public Diplomacy, the key federal bureau in charge of “educating” the American public on U.S. policy in Central America and the U.S. war on Nicaragua.

Dated March 5, 1985, the memo stated that the office was conducting “projects of a priority nature” that “require the expertise available from personnel of the 4th Psychological Operations Group, Fort Bragg, North Carolina.”

Within three months, five “psy-ops” specialists from Fort Bragg were headed for Washington, D.C. The five men were soldiers trained in psychological warfare — experts at identifying cultural and political weaknesses that can be used to manipulate the populations of foreign countries.

This time, though, their target was not a foreign country. This time, their target was the American people. The U.S. government was waging what one official called “a huge psychological operation”

against its own citizens to convince them to support the Nicaraguan contras — and in this war, many of the battles would be fought in the South.

Around the Office of Public Diplomacy, an obscure bureau in the State Department that went by the even more obscure acronym S/LPD, the Fort Bragg specialists were referred to as the “A-Team.” As a deputy in the office informed his boss in a memo dated May 30, “We have enough to keep them busy until the contras march into Managua.”

The specialists were kept busy analyzing classified cables and designing glossy government publications that portrayed the Sandinista government as a Soviet-sponsored menace, and the contras as “freedom fighters.” Among their duties, according to a memo prepared by Lt. Colonel Daniel Jacobowitz, another “psy-ops” specialist, was to look “for exploitable themes and trends, and . . . inform us of possible areas for our exploitation.”

## TARGET: THE SOUTH

Why were U.S. psychological warfare personnel engaged in the “exploitation” of the American public? The answer is part of a larger story of how the Reagan administration ran what a staff report of the House Foreign Affairs Committee called “a domestic covert operation designed to lobby the Congress, manipulate the media, and influence public opinion.”

Although the story of how the White House set up a veritable propaganda ministry within the executive branch has slowly begun to emerge, part of the story that remains largely untold is how the South played a pivotal role in this secret “public diplomacy” campaign.

The region was a target for two reasons. First, it was in the South, according to political strategists working with Lt. Colonel Oliver North, that conservative “swing vote” Democrats were most vulnerable to pressure to support contra aid. Congress had cut off all CIA military assistance to the contras in 1984; if the Administration was going to win back contra aid, the margin of victory would likely come from the votes of congressional representatives in Georgia, North Carolina, Kentucky, Florida, and Texas.

Second, private sector groups working closely with the White House needed millions of dollars to lobby these Southern swing votes, and some of the richest conservative donors willing to foot the bill hailed from Southern states. Thus, although the ultimate target of the Reagan administration’s “public diplomacy” operations was Capitol Hill, the South became the key zone of operation.

## THE WAR OF IDEAS

The genesis of the public diplomacy operation dates back to January 1983, when President Reagan signed National Security Decision Directive 77 entitled, “Management of Public Diplo-



macy Relative to National Security.” This directive authorized the creation of a centralized bureaucracy in the National Security Council (NSC), dedicated to waging the “war of ideas” on issues like Central America, nuclear arms, and Afghanistan.

That same month, on January 25, CIA propaganda veteran Walter Raymond Jr. wrote a “Top Secret” memo hailing public diplomacy as “a new art form” and arguing that “it is essential that a serious and deep commitment of talent and time be dedicated to this.”

From documents and depositions released during the Iran-contra investigation, Raymond emerges as the key bureaucrat in the public diplomacy apparatus. Transferred to the NSC in 1982 by CIA Director William Casey, Raymond chaired a Central America public diplomacy task force which met Thursday mornings in his office at the Old Executive Office Building next to the White House. Lt. Colonel North attended some of these meetings, as did representatives of the CIA, the Departments of Defense and State, and the U.S. Information Agency.

There was no question about who they answered to. In a memo to Casey, Raymond reported that the task force “takes its policy guidance from the Central American RIG.” By RIG, he meant the Restricted Interagency Group made up of Oliver North, Assistant Secretary of State Elliott Abrams, and CIA operative Allan Fiers — the same men who were overseeing the covert operations to secretly funnel weapons to the contras.

Raymond was also the driving force behind the creation of the Office of Public

Diplomacy and the appointment of Otto Reich, an anti-Castro Cuban American and former city administrator in Miami, to be its director. Although the S/LPD office was located in the State Department, it reported directly to North and others at the National Security Council.

On the surface, the office functioned as a ministry of information, churning out vituperative “white papers,” sending officials around the country to speak to civic groups, paying prominent Nicaraguan exiles to write anti-Sandinista diatribes. Behind the scenes, however, S/LPD engaged in a number of dubious, if not illegal practices. Besides using “psy-ops” personnel to look for “exploitable” themes, the office manipulated news coverage of Central America by selectively leaking classified information to favored journalists. It also planted opinion pieces known as “white propaganda” — articles written by people on the federal payroll, but published under the names of scholars or contra leaders.

### FROM MOTOR LODGE TO CONDO LAND

Since the law forbids U.S. government officials from direct lobbying, the Office of Public Diplomacy turned to private sector groups to raise money and lobby the Southern swing votes in Congress. As early as August 1983, William Casey called together a group of corporate public relations specialists to discuss how to “market the issue” of Central America and promote a “public-private relationship” to generate funds.

The office also used taxpayer money to employ public relations firms to conduct lobbying and propaganda. According to a March 17, 1987 staff report prepared for U.S. Representative Dante Fascell (D-Florida), S/LPD “was paying one or more outside contractors to conduct ‘public diplomacy’ aimed at influencing the Congress” and had entered into “secret contractual arrangements which might violate prohibitions against lobbying and disseminating government information for publicity and propaganda purposes.”

The main contractor for S/LPD was International Business Communications (IBC), a public relations firm in Washington, D.C. run by former government officials Richard Miller and Frank Gomez. Between 1984 and 1986, IBC received seven contracts totaling over \$440,000, including one \$276,000 contract classified “secret” to do contra media work — write briefing reports, create mailing lists, hold press conferences, and take the contras on a national speaking tour.

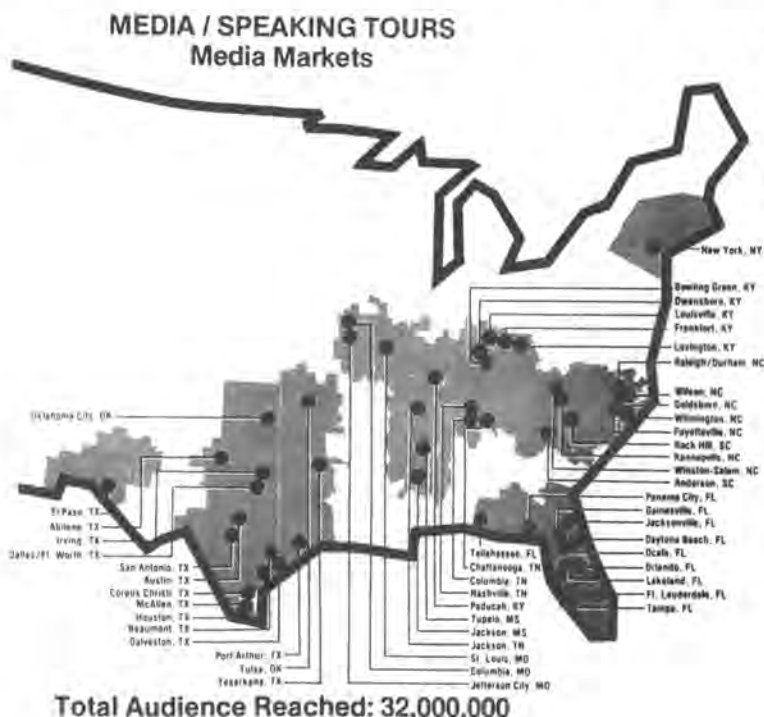
IBC, in turn, worked closely with a tax-exempt, ostensibly non-profit organization called the National Endowment for the Preservation of Liberty (NEPL) run by conservative fundraiser Carl “Spitz” Channell. Channell grew up in Elkins, West Virginia, where he managed the family-owned motor lodge before heading for Capitol Hill in 1979. He quickly rose from obscurity as a protege of the late conservative tactician and fundraiser Terry Dolan to control an empire of nine anti-communist foundations and political action committees.

There was lots of money to be made in helping the contras. By 1986, Channell reported a gross worth of \$1.4 million. He dined at Washington’s finest restaurants, drove a \$20,000 Lincoln Town Car (when he wasn’t being chauffeured in a limo), and lived with his lover in a \$300,000 condominium.

### BATTLE OF THE AIRWAVES

In late 1985 and the spring and summer of 1986, Channell and Richard Miller spent more than \$1.5 million on political ads and lobbying designed to pressure Congress to aid the contras. The South was a particular target of the political campaign. In one lobbying strategy paper put together for Channell, Terry Dolan wrote:

*I do agree that special attention should be paid to the South for three reasons:  
1) These congressmen are generally more conservative.*



2) *The South will bear most of the burden of a refugee problem.*

3) *A shockingly high number of these Southern conservatives voted wrong.*

Thus, Channell and Miller put together a sophisticated and well-financed lobbying/public relations campaign aimed mostly at the South. A program of television ads and contra speaking tours, dubbed the Central American Freedom Program, was put together in February 1986. NEPL paid \$110,000 for extensive polling to guide where the ads and tours would have the most impact on the "swing voters."

"Freedom Fighters TV" was the centerpiece of the Central American Freedom Program. Channell poured over \$1 million into the anti-Sandinista, pro-contra commercials, which were produced and placed by the Baltimore-based Robert Goodman Agency.

"Our strategy is to target those Congressmen who, by virtue of their record on Nicaragua, seemingly have yet to make up their mind," Goodman wrote in a planning report prepared for Channell on December 9, 1985. "This national spot program is a pioneer attempt to effectively influence public opinion as prelude to a critical congressional debate and vote."

Lt. Colonel North provided some of the footage of Soviet-built Hind helicopters for the political commercials. Miller and Channell even took prototypes of the ads to show Assistant Secretary of State Elliott Abrams, who said he thought they were "pretty good." When Abrams testified before the Iran-contra committees, the following exchange took place with Representative Fascell:

*Fascell: Did you know Mr. Miller and Mr. Channell were targeting congressional districts for ad campaigns designed to influence targeted congressmen on aid to the contras?*

*Abrams: They told me, as I recall, that they were targeting kind of the Sun Belt.*

*Fascell: That is me, I am the Sun Belt.*

The pro-contra commercials ran in congressional swing districts for eight weeks in February and March before an initial vote on the president's request for \$100 million in contra aid. In March, another Goodman report on the ads congratulated Channell on his success.

"NEPL's national television campaign achieved one more important thing: it influenced votes." Goodman wrote:

*For example, NEPL advertised in four of Florida's biggest television markets, covering the home districts of 16 Congressmen. On the final House vote on Contra funding in late March, 14 of the 16 Congressmen sided with the President in support of the Freedom Fighters. This is dramatic considering many of these Congressmen were considered to be on the "swing vote" list.... The results were even more impressive in markets like Jackson (MS) and Savannah (GA) where our success rate on the final vote tally hit 100%!*

Contra speaking tours, directed by IBC and Richard Miller, accompanied the barrage of television commercials: Channell spent some \$600,000 taking contra leaders to swing districts. An NEPL press statement in February 1986 reported, "In November [1985], NEPL launched a series of speaking and media tours reaching 36 cities throughout the Southeastern United States. By the end of February, the tours will have reached 18 of these cities twice. To date, they have reached an audience of 32 million."

Finally, in the last eight days before the congressional vote on contra aid in June 1986, Channell announced that his

organization would launch one last-ditch blitz of television ads. This campaign cost \$200,000 and focused exclusively on 10 congressmen in Kentucky, Tennessee, North Carolina, and Texas.

On June 23, 1986, Congress passed Reagan's \$100 million contra aid package by a narrow margin. Public diplomacy operatives inside the government and out trumpeted their success. "It is clear we would not have won the House vote without the painstaking deliberative effort undertaken by many people in the government and outside," Walter Raymond exulted in an August 7, 1986 secret memo prepared for CIA Director Casey. On November 11, only two weeks before the sale of arms to Iran and the diversion of funds to the contras was uncovered, Oliver North awarded Spitz Channell a "freedom fighter" commendation from the president.

## THE WRIGHT STUFF

But the contra lobby campaign didn't end with the congressional vote. Throughout the fall, Channell's network of organizations spent thousands of dollars on negative and derogatory ads in a thinly veiled—and patently illegal—effort to defeat Democratic candidates who had voted against contra aid.

"By its own admission, NEPL targeted its contra advertising primarily against Democratic candidates in Southern states, including, for example, Ed Jones in Tennessee, J.J. Pickle in Texas, and W.G. Hefner in North Carolina," the Democratic Congressional Campaign charged in a complaint filed with the Federal Election Commission last April. "The evidence is clear that NEPL worked... to influence the outcome of congressional elections in 1986—against Democratic candidates."

Although no congressmen were defeated by this campaign, a number expressed outrage at the tactics used against them. "I have to assume that the White House and White House officials knew these ads were going to be run," Representative Pickle said.

NEPL also had plans to target incoming Speaker of the House Jim Wright (D-Texas), who had voted against contra aid. In 1985, Channell commissioned a comprehensive 37-page lobbying "action plan" on Wright's 12th congressional district in Fort Worth, Texas. The plan laid out a grassroots political campaign strategy to pressure Wright through the mobilization of local conservatives and the use of direct mail drives, "freedom petitions," and the media.



### VOICEOVER TOP:

**"THE COMMUNISTS NOW HAVE 120,000 MEN UNDER ARMS IN NICARAGUA."**

### VOICEOVER BOTTOM:

**"AND CONGRESSMAN J.J. PICKLE STILL ISN'T SUPPORTING THE PRESIDENT ON NICARAGUA. BETTER WAKE HIM UP."**

THESE STORYBOARDS WERE USED TO DESIGN TV ADS TO PRESSURE SOUTHERN CONGRESSMEN TO SUPPORT THE CONTRAS. THE WHITE HOUSE SECRETLY HELPED RAISE \$1 MILLION FOR THE LOBBYING CAMPAIGN.



"Wright's vote against military aid to the freedom fighters is not ideological, but pragmatic," stated the report, which was prepared by the Edelman Public Relations firm in Washington, D.C. "Were he not a member of the Democratic leadership with ambitions for the Speakership, he may very well have voted for aid, at least non-military aid. Because of his ambitions, it is unlikely he will change his vote... However, an effective campaign by NEPL in his district may force Wright to revisit the issue and keep an open mind... the district campaign will, at the least, attempt to neutralize Wright's active opposition to military aid to the contras."

### BLUE-RINSE BRIGADE

To raise the millions of dollars needed to pay for this extensive propaganda and lobbying campaign, Channell again turned to the South. His fundraising strategy was simple: target conservatives — particularly elderly wealthy widows known as the "blue-rinse brigade" — and use access to the White House as bait for donors.

Much of his fundraising took place in the South. Two of his largest donors, for example, lived in Austin, Texas: Ellen Garwood, who provided over \$2 million, and Mae Doherty King, who readily gave Channell almost \$1 million. Donors who could give from \$20,000 to \$200,000 were brought to the White House for a private briefing with Lt. Colonel North, who showed them his slide show and gave them his standard speech about how the contras were suffering at the hands of the Soviet-supplied Sandinistas. Those donors who could give \$300,000 or more were treated to a private session with President Reagan himself. Thus, Channell essentially sold tickets to the White House as a means of raising millions of dollars for a propaganda and lobbying campaign.

North's personal calendars released by investigators indicate that he met with Miller 49 times in 1985 and 1986 to discuss raising money for arms and "approved PR programs." Although North testified under oath before the Iran-contra committees that "I do not recall ever asking a single, solitary American citizen for money," he did write fundraising appeals on NSC stationery to over 30 of Channell's biggest contributors. Many of these letters were addressed to wealthy Southern Republicans in Texas, Kentucky, Mississippi, Florida, and Georgia.

"During 1985, the hope of freedom and democracy in Nicaragua was kept alive with the help of the National Endowment for the Preservation of Liberty and fine Americans such as you," North wrote in a January 1986 pitch to Mrs. Barbara Bullitt Christian of Prospect, Kentucky. "In the weeks ahead, we will commence a renewed effort to make our assistance to the Democratic Resistance Forces even more effective. Once again your support will be essential."

North sent an identical letter to Nelson Bunker Hunt, the Texas billionaire. To solicit Hunt, Channell arranged a private plane to fly North to Texas for a dinner meeting in September 1985. In a scene right out of the TV program *Dallas*, the three men ate at the Petroleum Club and discussed the contras' need for \$5 million in equipment. The final report issued by the Iran-contra investigators describes the scene:

*North gave his standard briefing, without slides, and showed Hunt a list of various contra needs. The list was divided about evenly between lethal and non-lethal items, and included... aircraft and a grenade launcher... The total price was about \$5 million. According to Channell, after discussing the items on the list and their prices, North "made the statement that he could not ask for funds himself but contributions could be made to NEPL...."*



**VOICEOVER TOP:**  
"COMMUNIST PLANES CAN STRIKE US IN ONLY TWO HOURS FROM THIS NEW BASE IN NICARAGUA."

**VOICEOVER BOTTOM:**  
"AND STILL CONGRESSMAN ED JONES WON'T SUPPORT THE PRESIDENT. CALL HIM."

*North then left the room, a maneuver that had been 'pre-arranged.'*"

As a result of this dinner, Hunt made two payments to NEPL of \$237,500 each.

In 1985 and 1986, Channell raised a total of \$10 million. Approximately half of the money — \$5 million — went to pay salaries and expenses for IBC and NEPL officials. Roughly \$2.7 million was transferred through IBC to North's secret bank account in Geneva to purchase contra weapons; another \$500,000 was paid to other individuals helping the contras. Most of the remaining money was used to pay for political ads and lobbying.

When the Iran-contra operations were exposed in November 1986, so too was the link between the National Security Council, the Office of Public Diplomacy, IBC, and NEPL. For their role in collaborating with Lt. Colonel North to raise money for contra weapons, Richard Miller and Spitz Channell became the first actors in the scandal to be brought to justice. (In the spring of 1987, both pleaded guilty to defrauding the U.S. Treasury.) In December 1987, Congress quietly closed down the Office of Public Diplomacy for its questionable "white propaganda" operations and its contract with IBC.

The State Department's inspector general has put the equivalent of a letter of reprimand in the personnel file of former S/LPD director Otto Reich, now ambassador to Venezuela.

But the larger issue of how the Reagan administration got away with using CIA propaganda specialists, psychological warfare personnel, and private-sector conduits in an effort to distort and stifle full democratic debate remains unexamined. As Thomas Jefferson once said, "Only an informed democracy will act in a responsible manner." Unless the American public demands its constitutional right to be truthfully informed, there is nothing to prevent this type of abuse from happening again. □

*Peter Kornbluh is an analyst with the National Security Archive in Washington, D.C. The views expressed in this article are not necessarily those of the Archive.*

*This article was supported by the Investigative Journalism Fund of the Institute for Southern Studies.*

*For the earliest reporting on the public diplomacy operation, see "Iran-Contra's Untold Story" by the author and journalist Robert Parry in Foreign Policy, Fall 1988.*

# White Baby



*By Jill McCorkle*

**I** could not take my eyes off my white baby; he looked like a little old man, his hair as white as the coat of the doctor that held him there. "Lack of pigment," the doctor told me later. He said all kinds of things, all kinds of words, but I just stared at my poor white baby and tried not to cry. Hadn't I wished myself white at least once in my life? And now my wish had come true in such a mean and twisted way. Poof! Abracadabra! I was sorry that I had ever thought such a thing.

My baby was not hard to spot in the nursery there. I stood and leaned against the wall that faced the big window. Like magic, when they saw me, they wheeled my white baby up to the front row. It made me feel so cold to look at him, cold as December, and I pulled

my robe that Everly had brought me as close around my body as I could get it; I dug my toes way down in those thick terry slippers my girls had picked out. He looked like a regular baby, turning his head, crying until his little face turned pink.

An older woman came and stood off to the side, a long-legged teenager clinging to the woman's arm. They were laughing and grinning, pressing their faces up against the glass. "A new grandbaby," the woman kept saying and that thin pale girl would say, "a sister" like an echo and the two leaned together and laughed. The woman was not dressed for a hospital visit; she wore pedal pushers and a man's work shirt, her thick gray hair pulled back and tied with a scarf. I tried not to listen in on them but it was hard because they wanted everybody to know why they were there. "I came as fast as I could," the woman said to me and held out her foot to show a dirty sneaker. "I was working in my yard and I didn't even take time to change my shoes. It's my oldest girl's baby, her second, this is her first." The thin girl turned and grinned at me.

Just yesterday, me and Everly were in such a state. He came to pick me up and he never even took off that heavy old belt with all of his telephone wire tools. I had a curler on the top of my head and didn't even remember it until I saw myself in those big mirrors and then I didn't even care.

"There must be some mistake," is what Everly said when the doctor held up our little baby, and I wanted to ask him how could it be a mistake when he just now saw that baby come out of me. I didn't have the breath to say a word right then; I just leaned back on that damp sheet and closed my eyes to the cool cloth that nurse held while the doctor's words floated right on by. I didn't want to look at Everly; I didn't want to hear that white baby cry.

"Why there's a little albino," that woman said and pointed in the nursery window. She shook her head sadly and I felt so ashamed for him. I turned my face away from their talking, stared at the row of orange plastic chairs there in front of the desk where just yesterday, Everly and I had stood so excited like we hadn't already gone through it four times, my bag packed with the new robe and slippers, notes from my girls. Their whispers seemed to get louder.

"You mean that's a BLACK baby?" the girl asked, her forehead wrinkled up. Then they looked at one another and laughed, the craziness of the notion that my snow white baby was black, and I couldn't help but wish that their white baby would come out black as pitch. "Hey Grandma," the girl said and gripped the woman's arm, jumped around a little from side to side because the nurse was wheeling in a new baby. "How do you KNOW that's a black baby? I mean either you're black or white."

"I know by how he looks."

"He LOOKS white," the girl said, her face going red when the woman grabbed her arm and shushed her. That girl kept staring at my baby, her forehead still wrinkled, until the nurse wheeled their baby right up next to mine. They had a girl baby, a pink ribbon taped to her slick bald head. They tapped on the glass and cooed, and I knew that woman's sneakers were firmly planted there on the linoleum for hours. My baby stretched his little white arms and I imagined he thought they were there for him with all their oohs and ahhs and words of love.

"Who are you here to see?" The woman turned suddenly, her face flushed with pure raw happiness.

"That one," I said and pointed to a dark brown baby girl in the far corner of the nursery.



Late that day, I looked out my window to the sidewalk that ran there in front of the hospital. My babies were all lined up in their Sunday School clothes, four little girls, ages ranging from nine to three, their hands held together like cutout paper dolls, their skin like gingerbread, glistening with the heat of summer, and in my mind there came to meet me that sweet soured smell of children who have run and played all day until their clean starched clothes are damp and limp.

Lolly, my oldest, held up a sign she had painted and the others scattered about like little squirrels on the grassy spot in front of her so they could see, too. I read "Mama" the letters all crayoned crooked, and I was making out the other words, "Miss" and "We" when the nurse tiptoed in from that bright hallway with him in her arms.

"You've got a hungry son," she said, but I didn't turn. I watched Sadie and Teena twirl like little pin wheels until drunk and wobbly; they flung themselves to the ground, arms stretched out rich brown upon the grass, mouths opened in laughter. I watched Scooter, my baby whose real name is Mary, undo a braid from her shiny black hair and fling the barrette at Everly who was sitting on a bench close by. Scooter is darker than the others; she is the same rich dark color of Everly. Scooter flung her arms in a wave, her hair all undone which is how she liked it, and I imagined Everly and Lolly trying to hold her down and braid her hair with her fighting every step of the way like a little wildcat. I waved to my babies, could almost hear Teena scream "watch this" before she placed her head upon the grass and kicked over a somersault that showed her lacy panties and landed her off to one side where the others were laughing.

"Have you thought of a name?" the nurse asked, and I shook my head while I watched Everly wave to me, shake his head while the girls lined up to leap frog, somersaults

ending every leap except for Scooter who climbed onto Lolly's back and just hung there like a cape. Everly was way down there but I knew the disappointment was still in his eyes. It was a look I couldn't forget. It was the same look the girls had that one Christmas when Santa didn't bring a thing asked for, and I felt so guilty and hopeless that I wanted to get on my knees and beg them to forgive me. But then they would have known, would've known the secret that their fat white Santa was nothing but me and Everly.

"Santa doesn't always just work on Christmas day," I told them later that night when they had abandoned the few new things and gone back to the television. "Santa knows a secret," I said and rubbed my stomach where Scooter was nothing but a tiny dark ball. "We're gonna have us a new baby, a brother or sister, come summertime." I was halfway there; I had their attention. "And Santa Claus, he knows that Mona Robinson's cat just had five baby kittens." Now, they were all around me, Everly, too, because he hadn't known about Scooter until that very minute. "Santa told me he wants you to have a kitten, too," I said and watched them clap their hands and laugh; they were much more excited over a kitten than a baby, except for Everly, of course, who came over and hugged me so tight.

"If you bought that kitten in a store," I heard Everly telling the girls. "It would cost a hundred dollars. Mona says it's part Persian." I was in the kitchen when they came in, one by one, the front door slamming and trapping all of the high-pitched squeals.

"He's a Persian," Lolly said and ran to me with that fluffy white ball. He was as white as my baby; white as snow, Everly said, and so Lolly named it Snoball like the snow at the North Pole, like the snow she'd never even see here in South Carolina. All night long, I kept hearing Lolly pad back and forth to the kitchen door where we had made Snoball a little cloth bed. "I can't believe he's mine," she sighed the one time that I got up to check on her, all the others asleep, Everly's snores as relaxed and even as Snoball purring. "A new baby will cost us," he had said just before falling asleep. "But we can do it," and I knew he had in his mind a son.

The nurse was still behind me, saying "there there" in response to his cries. I looked out the window, looked at my strong dark children and I knew how mama cats must feel when they kick that runt to the side and pretend it never was. Snoball was the pick of his litter, Mona had told the girls, and he grew up so fat and big. He grew into a regular old Tom cat, Persian or not, and took to roaming about and getting into fights until he got hit out there on Sampson Highway. Just remembering that gave me a sudden rush of fear that made me wish I could trap my babies right there, just as they were that second and keep them there forever.

"Who does he look like?" I turned suddenly with the

voice, fast enough to see the nurse's face aflame. I made her uncomfortable without meaning to; I couldn't think of any words and before I could, she was talking so fast, telling me he's so sweet, the best boy in the nursery. "He loves cuddling," she said and held him up close, the same way Lolly had hugged that kitten. "He's so sweet." I wanted to say keep him, but no, I took my baby and held him, looked at him. He grabbed my dark finger and pulled it to his mouth.

"He looks like me, I think," I told the nurse, who seemed to breathe out for the first time, her eyes watering as she smiled and nodded. "And his eyes, well, his eyes make me think of my mama."

When the nurse left, I went back to the window just in time to see Everly and the girls turn off the sidewalk into the parking lot. I watched until Scooter who was the last in line, skipped around that corner and out of my sight. My baby acted like he was starving, those tiny white hands kneading my skin while he nursed. Who did my baby look like? I didn't know. His eyes looked nothing like my mama's; his eyes were so pale I felt like I could've seen through them if I had stared long enough.



ay back, before Everly got his job with the phone company, we both used to work at the restaurant of the Holiday Inn that's north of town on the interstate. I waited tables and he bussed them. We weren't married long and people knew it by the way we'd pass and touch one another's hands or the way we'd wave across the dining room. One day I had a group of ladies who said they were just passing through, said that they were going on a vacation trip to Florida, that two were widowed and the other two had left their husbands way up in Maryland to take care of themselves for a week. I wanted to tell them something as well, so I pointed to Everly who was clearing a table and I said, "That's my husband over there." It made me feel so proud I had Everly, so young and alive, and that I had no wants to go anywhere without him.

"Why," one of the women said, the one who had been driving all morning. "He looks just like Sidney Poitier." I laughed and thanked her, knowing full well that the only similarity between my Everly and Sidney Poitier was their coloring. Everly and I laughed about it all that night; I called him Mr. Poitier and we fell out on the bed laughing. I laughed, but later, in my mind, I thought of all kinds of things I might have said to make them see that Everly looked nothing like Sidney Poitier. I could have said, "Yes, and I look just like Lena Home and Ethel Waters and all three of the Supremes. And you. You all four look just alike. I can't tell you apart. I can't remember who ordered

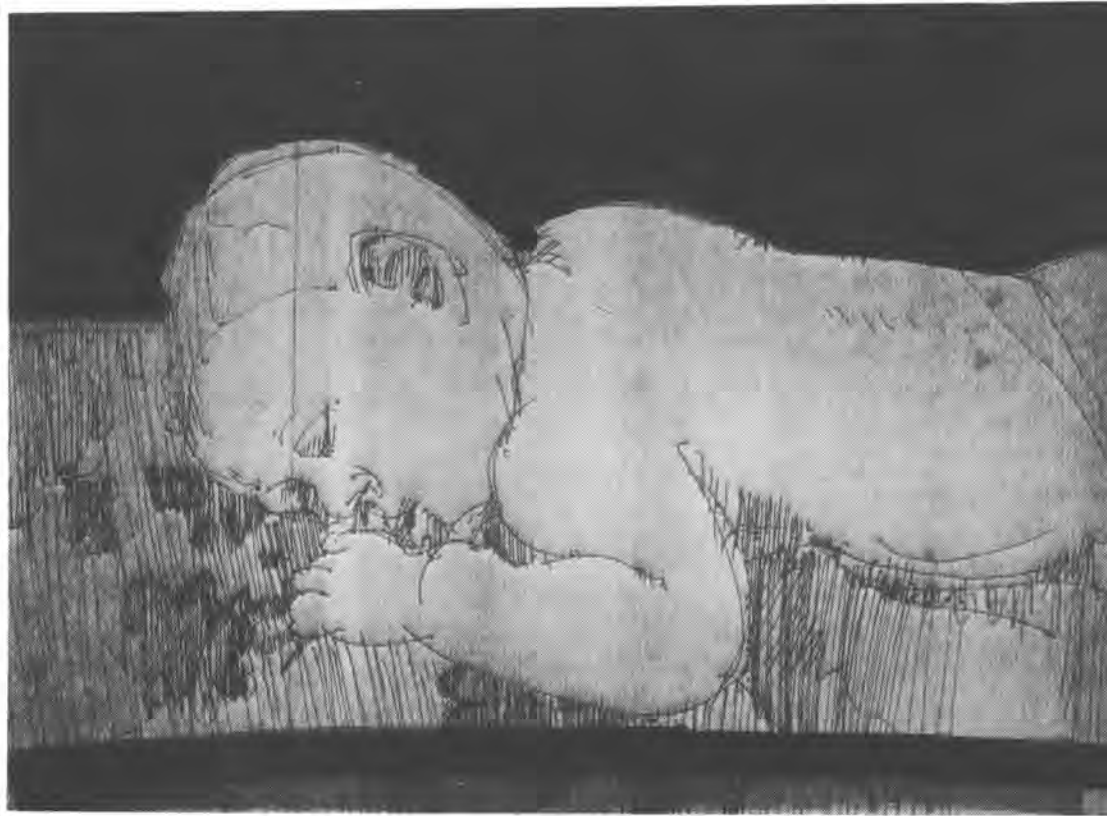
chicken salad and who got the diet plate." They would've frozen, white faces frozen like they had seen a ghost. I would have waited a few long minutes and then I would have said, "It's because you're white."

I stared down at my baby, his skin so pale and thin next to mine. It made me think of those little summer frogs that Teena likes to catch, their bodies so clear looking, you can almost see bone. I pulled my baby closer to me, my arms like a strong wall around his little body, and told him I was so sorry that he had turned out that way. I told him I didn't know of anybody that he looked like. He drew in close to me because he didn't know; he didn't know a thing but that I was his mama. I wished he never did have to know.

My baby closed his eyes and slept there in my arms for the longest time. There was something about the spacing of those little sleepy eyes that made me think of Everly. I told him we were gonna do just fine. He was sweet, a good baby like they had all said, and when the nurse came to get him, he didn't want to leave. He cried when he was pulled away from the warm spot I had made for him in my arms. "His name is Everly Bennett Winston Jr.," I told the nurse before I had time to think, before I had time to shape in my mind a picture of Everly holding a photo of his namesake for all the people at the phone company to see, his hand curled into a hard dark fist that dared anyone to speak.

**I**t was hot the next day when Everly came to get us; Mona Robinson was at our house with the girls. I wrapped Bennett in a blanket, careful so that bright sun wouldn't get in his eyes. Everly said he had the crib all fixed and ready, that the girls were so excited, that Scooter had tried to put dollbaby clothes on that new cat and got her hand scratched. He said Mona had brought over enough food to keep us eating for a week or better, that Mona said she

planned to wait on me hand and foot. He didn't say if he had told them what my baby looked like and I didn't ask. I knew by the look on Mona's face that he hadn't. She stood there with a big red balloon and I watched her laughing face go quiet. "He's white," Lolly said and looked up at me, her little forehead more wrinkled than that girl's at the hospital. "Oh, but isn't he sweet?" Mona asked and stepped toward me like she had just snapped from a spell. Mona took Bennett and she kissed his little cheek and pulled him into her chest. "He's fine," she whispered and looked at me, her eyes like she might cry and for what reason, I wondered, happy or sorry; I couldn't stand to ask her.



Scooter took to Bennett right off; I'd find her little barrettes, like gifts, left there by the crib where she had sat and watched him. Scooter didn't notice any difference until the others pointed it out to her. One by one, they all came to me to ask WHY and I explained the best way I could. I said Bennett was special and hated myself for saying it when what I really meant was different. I stayed in the house with that baby for two months. I might have stayed locked in forever if Everly hadn't talked me into getting out, talked me into taking the baby out. I went to the grocery store and I knew people were staring at me with my snow white baby. I finally stopped, right there in the meat department, and turned to face the woman who was looking at me. I looked at her, stared at her until she stopped staring at us and went

back to her shopping. "You did right," Mona told me later while she sat on my porch and rocked Bennett. I was braiding Scooter's hair in perfect plaits around her head even though I knew she'd undo them the first chance she got. "I don't want him to ever feel ashamed," Mona said, and for the first time in all these years of me knowing her, I got so mad. It was like she was Bennett's mama; it was like she was calling me ashamed. I pushed Scooter away from me, told her I was tired of plaiting and for her to go on and play, take those braids out. I waited while Scooter ran down the road where some others were playing, waited to see if Mona was going to put in another two cents worth.

"You don't know what it's like to be ashamed," I told her. "You don't know."

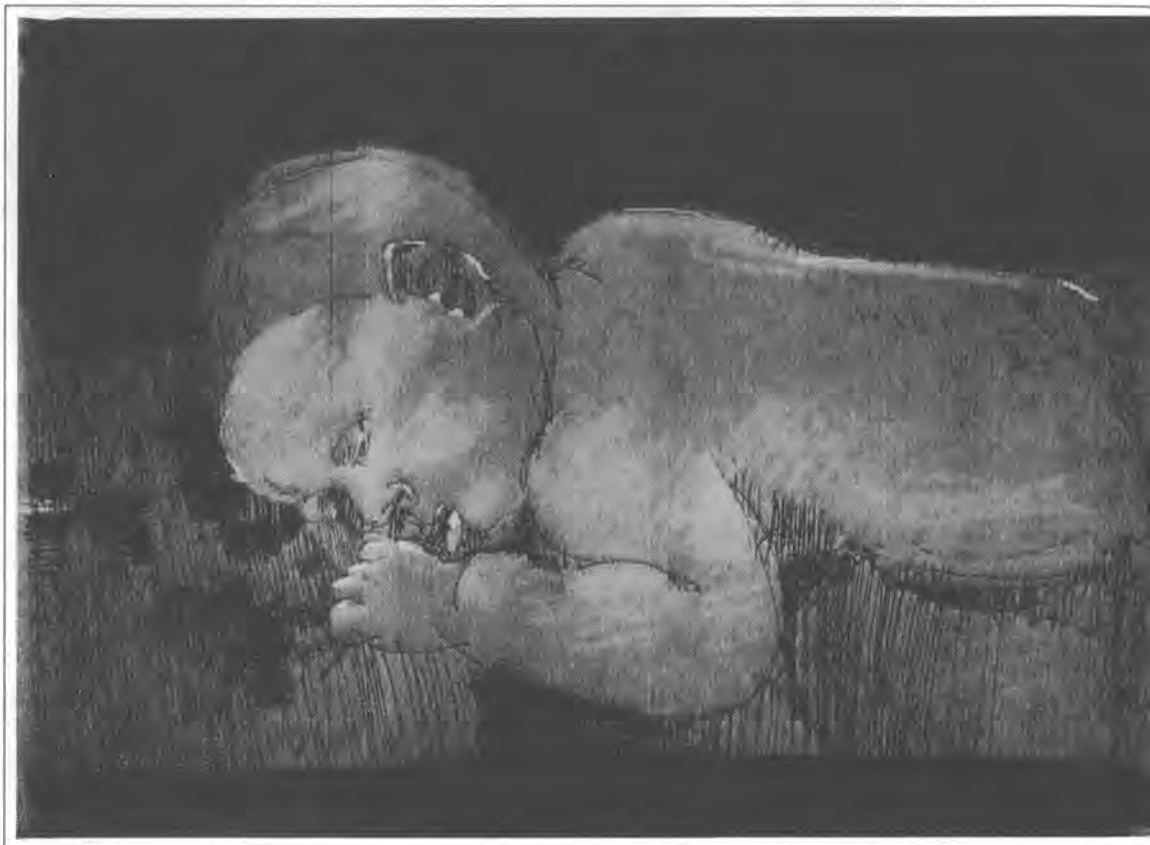
"No." Mona stared down at my baby and shook her head. I tried to calm myself down, but the longer Mona sat there like that with my baby held so close, the madder I felt. I was just on the verge of grabbing Bennett and telling her never to touch him again, when she looked up at me. "I have no idea," she whispered and all my anger fell right off. Mona loved my babies like they were her own; Mona had told me once that she'd give anything to have one of her own. Something inside her body was not right. "But I love Bennett," she continued. "I love him and I don't want

anybody ever leaving him feeling like he doesn't deserve that." I sat down in the rocker beside her and leaned my head into hers; I said, "What would I do without you?" and I watched my Scooter way down the road where she was skipping a rope, her hair bushing out in little twists. "If you didn't have me," Mona said, her voice nothing more than a crackly whisper, head pressing in closer to mine, "you'd have to hire a maid." We laughed, laughed until we couldn't stop, laughed until Bennett woke up and started crying and Lolly and Teena came out to see what was funny. Mona and I had both done some work as domestics; it seemed that was water long gone under the bridge.

Bennett learned to crawl even faster than Scooter did.

I'd be in the kitchen and in no time at all, he'd make his way from that living room rug in there to my feet. One day I heard Teena calling him in a little singsong voice like you might use to call a cat. "Here Whitey," she said and I froze there in the doorway, so much on the tip of my tongue, when I saw Bennett make his way over and curl in her arms, responding to the sweetness I had mistaken for something else.

Sometimes at night I can't sleep for thinking of all we have ahead of us. One night I dreamed that Bennett was a grown man, far off in college where everybody thought he was white. I got a letter that said he was getting married,



that she was white and didn't know about any of us down here in South Carolina. He said he couldn't come home anymore, that it would ruin his life. He said that he told that girl he didn't have any family, and somehow, when I thought of Bennett in that dream, he had eyes just like my mama. I woke myself up crying; I had to get up, leave Everly there in the bed, and tiptoe into the living room to make sure the crib was still there, that my baby was still in it.

Everly tells me that we can't ask why, can't know why, but sometimes I do ask, can't help but ask, and if I think on it all too long, I feel my body get hard all over. Bennett is almost two now and I know it won't be much longer until

he starts to ask ME why. Just last week, I heard a boy from down the road talking to Teena. They were on the porch and I had the windows open. Bennett had fallen asleep right there on the floor, tired from running around in the yard where I had been working. He smelled like that sunning screen that I had rubbed him down with. "I'll pay a quarter to see that albino," I heard that boy say and I don't even know what Teena answered or if she did at all, because I flew out that front door with all the energy that I have held in all this time. That child backed off, stumbling on the bottom step, and I grabbed his arms so tight I could've snapped them off. I pushed him up against a tree and shook him; I shook him for all he was worth, the tears rolling down his face and that only made me madder, only made me want to shake him harder. I heard Teena screaming but I don't know what she said, or what I said; all I know is that I held those lean brown arms of his and shook him until Mona came and pulled me away from him. He backed off slowly, eyes so wide, while I squatted there in the yard and tried to hide the sobs that were coming from my mouth. Teena stood way off on the porch, Scooter hugged up close to her like they were afraid of me. Lolly and Sadie were peeking around the corner of the house that same way.

"You crazy woman," that boy called when he was half a block away. "I'll tell my mama what you done to me."

"You tell her," I whispered while Mona knelt there beside me, hugged. I'LL TELL MY MAMA. I imagined Bennett saying that his whole childhood; I imagined big dark boys waiting for Bennett behind the schoolhouse, on the schoolbus. I imagined them pinning his thin white arms and shaking him until the tears came from those clear pale eyes. "I don't know why I did that," I told Mona and sat back in the dirt, but I did know. I know that I was shaking that boy for what he had said, but I also know that I shook him for everything that is ahead of us, all of the times when I'll want to shake somebody and not have the power to do it.

Everly keeps telling me that we can't think about it all at one time. "We got to take things as they come," he says. "We can't do it all for him. Bennett's gonna have to learn to take care of himself one day." Everly tells me that I've got to have faith, that if I keep Bennett from doing things like other children, then I'll be the one that makes him feel different. Still, I can't help but think of things that might happen. I can't help but think of the fighting Everly and I might do over whether or not to let Bennett do something. I can't help but think that the girls could grow up to be ashamed of him, that he might never have a friend, get invited to a party, have a date, marry, have somebody other than us and Mona that loves him. I have to think about what I'm gonna do.



I watch Bennett now, laughing while he follows an old tabby cat, and I can't help but hate myself for the way I felt the first time I saw him there against the doctor's coat, the way I spent that whole first year wishing that I'd get up one morning and find him browned overnight. I hate myself for ever feeling that I didn't want him, for overlooking him and lying when I said that other baby in the nursery was mine. I love my girls; I love them to death, but the way I love Bennett is bigger than anything I can understand. "We can't give Bennett all the love and attention," Everly tells me. "We've got the girls to think of, too." And, I know he's right, but when I watch my girls so brown and healthy, skipping right into a crowd of other children, I can't help but give Bennett all the extra. Maybe cats have a way of knowing if they kept that one so much weaker and smaller than the others, that they couldn't help but give it the most time and loving; maybe they know that they would fuss and worry over that one for a lifetime. Maybe they see in that one all the weakness and shame of themselves.

When Bennett turns five, we are going to have the biggest birthday party that this side of town has ever seen. We are going to have silver balloons and a clown and so many ice-cream cakes you can't count, and we'll only invite the children that have been nice; the others will stand down the road a piece and watch and feel sorry that they've acted ugly. And he will get to and from school with no trouble if I have to get on that bus and ride it myself. I will take him down to the dime store when Olan Mills sets up, and I'll get a nice portrait made; I'll get enough wallet-sized photos to give to everybody in town. I'll say, "Who do you think he looks like, me or Everly?" And every day that passes, every day that he moves further down the road to play, to go to school, I'll be right there on the porch waiting for him, never knowing what to expect, and with every word, every time my arms pull him in to where he's safe, I will have to wonder on all that Everly says. Am I doing him right or doing him wrong.

Now, he reaches toward the floor fan, those blades whirring, casting shadows on his small white hand. "No baby." I say and pull him away as I've done a hundred times before. He smiles at me and then as soon as I turn my head, he goes right back again. □

*Jill McCorkle is a native of Lumberton, North Carolina. She is the author of Tending to Virginia, (Algonquin Press, 1987.)*

## A Long Ways to Walk

By Susan Tucker

*The image of black maid and white employer is a pervasive one in the South. For well over a century, black women have been leaving their homes and their families to work in the homes of Southern whites—cooking their meals, cleaning their rooms, caring for their children. They are the lowest paid of all workers. Some still do not receive the minimum wage, few have health insurance, and many receive no Social Security benefits when they retire. Isolated from each other and forced to compete among themselves, they have been unable to organize and sustain any long-term union to improve their pay and working conditions.*

*Telling Memories Among Southern Women, a new collection of oral histories from Louisiana State University Press, is one of the first scholarly works that lets the women on both sides of domestic work speak for themselves. Compiled by Tulane University research librarian Susan Tucker, the book captures the voices of 21 black domestics and an equal number of white employers in the Deep South.*

*Throughout the narratives, Tucker*

*seeks to understand the ways in which domestic workers connected Southerners—white and black—to one another. "Female domestic workers in the South, more than any other group of workers born between 1880 and 1965, personally experienced and witnessed at first hand the ways race and class governed the lives of people in the South," Tucker writes. "They were participants in the day-to-day lives of the two sides of segregation."*

### ZELDA GREENE (B. 1913)

The lady where I work now, she's got it all planned. Just like you go to work every day and not all of a sudden something spring up. Like she plan company, she plans ahead of time. She don't wait till that day when I get there and say, "Oh, we going to have company, Zelda." She don't do that the whole 28 years. I never known her to plan company the same day she was going to have it.

Like she had planned yesterday morning for the Junior League sustaining

members. They came and had coffee and discussed business—like, you know, saving energy and stuff like that. I say stuff, because, you know, where we would think, it would be nothing. Wouldn't give it a thought about it, because it don't be nothing. Like this white lady say, every time she go out the room, she turn the light out; she go back in, she turn the light on. I say to myself, "Now what is that to talk about over coffee?" It didn't sound interesting to me.

Otherwise it was socializing. They get together, and it's women of her age. They get together and discuss different plans about energy, who's going on a diet. Lord, you wouldn't believe what they be talking about—whether they going to get a permanent, what beauty parlor they go to, whether she any good or not. Lord! But you know, when they have their meeting they stay one hour. They come in there at 10 o'clock, and they have that meeting, drank that coffee and eat them Danish rolls, and 11, they getting ready to go. They don't stay over.

Most everything they do is planned. And the sustaining members they all take their clothes down to the Junior League shop. They have to clean out their closets before their husbands let them get anything else. Miz Holland's husband's dead, and she buys whatever she wants to buy. They buy seasonal clothes. They don't go buy just to be buying. Everything is planned. They don't just say: "Well, I saw a pretty dress. I think I'll just buy that dress." It's got to be for a purpose. It's planned for the winter, spring, summer. They live planned lives.

### ALETHA VAUGHN (B. 1930)

They treat you like some kind of animal instead of a person.

In fact, the animals get treated better than the servants. Plenty of 'em let the cat sleep in the bed with 'em! And then they'd be afraid you'd sit on the cat. And then they were afraid of you! Me, I was told if you lie down with dogs, you get up with fleas. Not them.



But you could prepare their foods for 'em, and they trusted you. I could have felt the same way they felt, but I wasn't raised to be evil, so I'd just go on and do my work. A lot of time I felt like spitting in their food, but I didn't. I would just go on and say: "Well, they'll get theirs. This is their heaven, I suppose."

I don't know. I just don't understand the whites' superiority to start with. That's why there is so much turmoil now, because everybody's suppose to have equal rights and just the white folks can't take that.

Once I had a lady come in, complaining about my work. She said something about "you niggers," and I told her to take her mop and mop her own damn kitchen. But if I had the opportunity now, instead of just walking off and leaving the mop in the bucket, I'd take the mop and whup the woman's behind with it — period. I couldn't take it. In fact, I wouldn't be saying, "Yes ma'am" and "No ma'am" like I used to.

### SOPHIE STEWART (B. 1940)

Hattie came every day. She came at six in the morning — her husband brought her — and she left at six in the evening for two dollars a day. This was in 1948.

I do feel I know a little bit more about black people because I knew Hattie. Like I have a better understanding of black people's hair because one morning Hattie washed her hair and told us about it. She usually wore her hair back in a little bun, very close to her head and tight. But this morning she had washed her hair, and it was down to her shoulders, and she hadn't put any oil in it, and it was standing out like a bushel basket. We had

a great time feeling her hair. She let us. It was like cotton.

And when I think of Hattie, sometimes I see that today I can go up to a black woman of the new era — I'm talking

about one that is not a maid — and I can relate to them as a person because I knew her. I know that black people are not foreigners or people that we can't understand. I always thought that Hattie could



*Photo courtesy LSU Press*

**WHITES OFTEN INCLUDED BLACK DOMESTICS IN FAMILY PORTRAITS SUCH AS THIS ONE FROM THE EARLY 1900s. WHITES SAID SUCH PHOTOS REFLECTED THE CENTRALITY OF BLACK CARETAKERS IN THEIR LIVES, WHILE BLACKS SAID WHITES SIMPLY "LIKED TO DRESS BLACKS UP" AND SHOW THAT THEY HAD "GOOD-LOOKING SERVANTS."**

have been included anywhere, and I never did quite understand why she couldn't.

### LINDA BARRON (B. 1933)

Some survive and some don't. What makes the difference? Black people call it mother wit. You have an extra sense about yourself. It's an extra sense you got about yourself, something your mother taught you to survive. Your mama tell you to run to the store and hurry up and come back — run, whatever you got to do.

Not everyone has it. I think there

should be an organization for domestic workers — to get them what mother wit can't. To get them health care and then to teach them esteem in their work. And there would be seminars — woman to woman, employers to domestic — to make the employer see how to make it a job worth doing.

I can remember when I was a young lady, going to school. There was a lady, Mrs. Daniels. I'll never forget that name. That lady would walk ... I would see that lady walking, and her shoes were turned over. And I used to say, "This lady goes to

work every day with shoes turned over, and look like she could buy her some more shoes."

And when I get off that bus today, I have a long ways to go. My shoes begin to turn just like Mrs. Daniels' shoes did. I say to myself: "I see why now this lady wore those type of shoes. She was trying to make it. She had such a long ways to walk."

And often I think of her. Sometimes I go along, and I see a mental picture of her. She used to pass my aunt's house every evening. She had a blue uniform. And those shoes — just crooked over. And she had kids. And I used to wonder why. Now I know why, because I've been in that same situation. That I'm trying to make it.

You get on the city bus. You'll see a lot of people trying to make it. You get on the Goodwood bus. Lot of goodies on the Goodwood bus. Sit there and you listen. Journey along and see what it is. Get the feel of it. See where the women get off the bus. Follow them. They got to walk so far. A long ways to walk.

When you get off that bus, there're a lot of people set their clocks by you. They know you're going to come along. You wave at them. You see them leaving — white people leaving their houses and the blacks coming there to take care of the houses. When they don't see you, they say, "Well, I haven't seen you in a long time." They set their clocks by you, but they don't know what it's like, how to walk back and forth from that bus.

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## A LAND AND LIFE REMEMBERED AMERICO-LIBERIAN FOLK ARCHITECTURE

Photographs by Max Belcher

Text by Svend E. Holsoe and Bernard L Herman

Afterword by Rodger P. Kingston

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# The Best of the Press

Daily newspapers in the South seem to be winning more than their share of awards these days. This year, for example, half of the

14 Pulitzer Prizes in Journalism went to Southern newspapers. In the first eight years of this decade, newspapers in the region won a total of 26 Pulitzers— compared to only 12 in the 1970s.

In truth, the South has been producing top-rate journalists for decades. Some launched their own journals, but most with inquiring minds and a burning desire to write the unfettered truth were pushed out of the region, to less hostile territory. Up North they made names for themselves and won plenty of awards.

What's new today is not the quality of writing in the South, but the permission given writers by their editors and publishers. Many newspapers in the region are now owned by corporate chains that strive for national standards of quality journalism, and they increasingly mirror the reporting of their national counterparts. As a result, Southern reporters are more likely to find their bosses ready to commit resources to expensive and timely investigations of subjects once considered off-limits.

When we first offered the Southern Journalism Awards last year, our goal was to encourage this trend. We sought to honor reporters whose stories broaden the range of issues, voices, and sources typically found in the mainstream media. By asking tough, often imaginative questions and probing untapped sources of information, these writers demonstrate the best potential of daily journalism to analyze a community's problems and its capacity for positive change.

The response to the awards this year reflects the continuing changes underway in the ownership and content of the region's newspapers. We received 120 entries in three divisions based on the size of a newspaper's circulation. Awards were offered for investigative reporting that critically examined the practices of private and public decision-makers, and for campaign reporting that went beyond the horse-race approach to discuss pressing issues.

To ensure that the contest rewarded journalism that is accountable to progressive community values as well as professional standards, entries were reviewed by a panel of 21 judges supervised by Harry Amana of the University of North Carolina School of Journalism. The panel included professors of political science, English, and journalism; magazine and newspaper editors; journalists and book authors; and community leaders and public officials from across the 13-state region.

We are deeply grateful to all 21 judges, who donated an enormous amount of their time to this project. The final panel consisted of Harry Amana, Don Baker, Les Dunbar, Paul Luebke, Joan Oleck, and Elizabeth Tornquist. Other judges included Bill Adler, Richard Boyd, Kip Branch, Margaret Brown, Robert V.N. Brown, Christina Davis-McCoy, Mark Lee, Marc Miller, Sylvia Miller, R.W. Reising, Hazel Rich, Mary Ann Ross, Rob Sikorski, Lena Steward, and Kristin Layng Szakos.

In this special section we present excerpts from the first place winners in each category and division, along with lists of the other winners and finalists.

—The Editors



# Winning at Any Cost

## CAMPAIGN REPORTING, DIVISION ONE

By R.G. Dunlop and Richard Whitt  
*The Courier-Journal*

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From October 11 to 18, 1987, the Louisville Courier-Journal exposed widespread corruption in state elections. After the series appeared, the legislature and the attorney general each established commissions to investigate the election process. As a result, the Kentucky General Assembly passed an omnibus election-reform bill.

LOUISVILLE— Kentucky's political and electoral system is being poisoned by vote-buying, illicit cash, legalized bribes, public apathy, and officials unwilling or unable to bring about change. The rights of individuals are frequently subordinated to those of special interests who view the state capitol at Frankfort and the county courthouses as their personal fiefdoms and who contribute to political candidates and parties in return for favors.

In an era of skyrocketing campaign costs, wealthy politicians have a significant advantage over those of average means. Poorly financed citizens' groups have little chance against big corporations, their lobbyists, and political action committees. Regulation of the campaign-finance system is weak, and efforts to strengthen it have been sporadic and largely unsuccessful.

The constitutional guarantees of free and fair elections have been subverted to

vote-buyers, vote-sellers, and short-sighted politicians who collectively taint a public office even before its occupant is sworn in. As a result, public confidence in state and local governments and the officials who run them has been damaged, undermining their ability to function effectively and efficiently.

In short, a year-long investigation by the *Courier-Journal* found a political system corrupted from top to bottom by money. "The excessive amount of money in campaigns, and where it's coming from, is perverting the system," said state Representative Joe Clarke. "It's coming from special interests... and the public interest is rarely served."

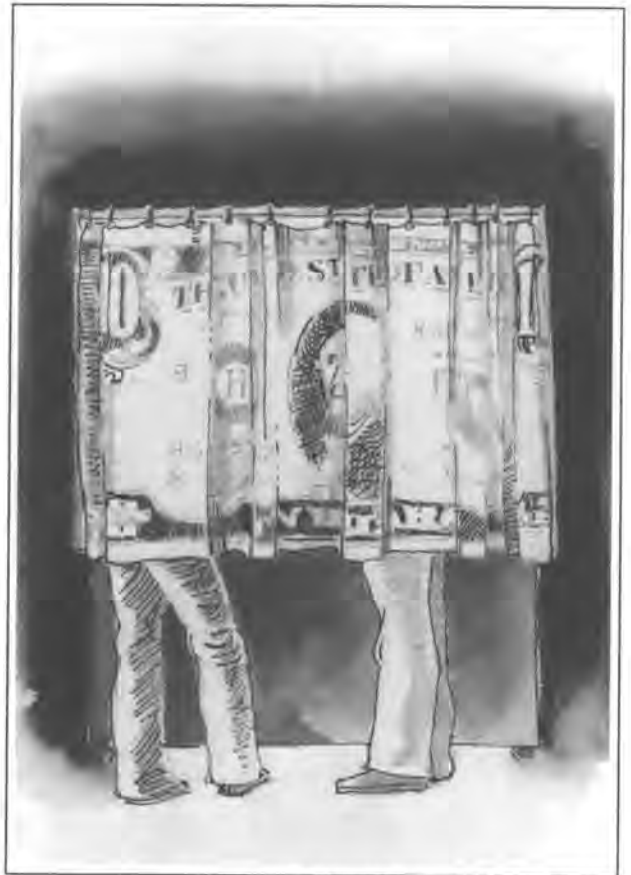
The newspaper found:

- ◆ The skyrocketing cost of political campaigns is increasing pressure on candidates to compromise themselves. Campaigns for governor, made ever more costly by such things as television advertising and sophisticated polling, are financed substantially by contributions given in return for promises. The price tag on this year's

governor's race is likely to be \$15 million, compared to \$2 million in 1967.

There are no limits on what a candidate can raise and spend, and state jobs, board seats, and contracts have been given to favored friends and loyal patrons in exchange for generous donations. Shortly after Governor Martha Layne Collins took office in December 1983, then-Transportation Secretary Floyd Poore, one of her top fundraisers, submitted a lengthy list of supporters who were in line to get state positions.

State courts have held that it isn't ille-



Illustrations by Herman Widerwohl, *Courier-Journal*

### Campaign Reporting: Division One (Sunday circulation over 100,000)

**Second Prize:** Rob Christensen of the *Raleigh News and Observer* for his reporting on North Carolina political operatives, campaign contributors, party factions, and primary elections. **Third Prize:** Pam Luecke, Hunt Helm, and Tom Loftus of the Louisville *Courier-Journal* for their "unauthorized financial profile of Wallace Wilkinson," Kentucky's new multi-millionaire governor. **Other finalists:** Bill McMahon for his series in the Baton Rouge *Morning Advocate* on the burgeoning power that unregulated political action committees wield in Louisiana legislative races. Mark Edgar and Carol Trujillo for their investigation in the *Dallas Morning News* of the Medrano family's machine politics — and vote fraud practices — in the city's Hispanic community. Bill Osinski for his year-long coverage in the *Tampa Tribune* of the presidential primaries leading up to Super Tuesday.

gal to promise a state job in return for a contribution or other support in a political campaign. And it apparently is also legal to promise contracts and seats on boards in exchange for contributions.

◆ The blessed act of giving as a prerequisite for getting is particularly prevalent in the case of architects, engineers, and others who do business with the state under personal-service contracts. Although state officials say these non-bid contracts are bestowed on merit, evidence abounds that the process is in fact highly politicized. And the bottom line is that major contributors to successful campaigns and political parties are very often rewarded.

A survey by the newspaper of roughly 70 architects and engineers showed that more than two-thirds of those who would

to the Democratic Party in the ensuing years.

◆ Regulation is sorely lacking. Kentucky's Registry of Election Finance is just that — a repository where some of the state's political spending is recorded. As an investigative and enforcement agency, the registry is impotent, lacking the funds, staff, and laws necessary to do battle with high-powered legions of electoral miscreants. The registry's executive director, Raymond Wallace, concedes that his agency lacks the resources even to meet the law's requirement that the campaigns of all state-wide candidates be audited within four years. The registry's audit of Collins' 1983 campaign will not be completed until after she leaves office.

◆ The influence of special interests is on the rise. In the last decade, the number of political action committees (PACs) registered in Kentucky has leaped from 93 to 331. The amount of money they gave to political candidates doubled, and the PAC percentage of total donations also rose sharply.

The law provides PACs with a giant loophole. While individuals in Kentucky can give no more than \$4,000 to a candidate in any one election, they can give unlimited amounts to PACs, which in turn can give as much as they want to a candidate. Four days before this year's May primary, four Lexington residents gave a total of \$21,000 to Citizens Committed to Better Government. That PAC passed the money on to the campaign of Wallace Wilkinson, who won the Democratic Party's nomination for governor.

Only after the *Courier-Journal* brought the matter to the registry's attention was the PAC asked to retrieve some of the money from Wilkinson and return it to the original contributors. The registry made its request — which it had no power to enforce — on the grounds that the PAC had been used in an attempt to disguise contributions in excess of the \$4,000 limit.

PACs are now wholly unfettered by regulation except for a requirement that

they file periodic reports with the registry. Occasional attempts to rein them in have been met either by silence or overt resistance in Frankfort. "I don't see much movement for reform," Clarke said. "The people who pass the laws are the people who get the contributions."

◆ Vote-buying flourishes to an extent incomprehensible to the public at large. It is most pervasive in Eastern Kentucky, where it has been an integral part of the political system for generations, but it also occurs in other predominantly low-income areas of the state. Those who should know — profiting politicians and the vote-buyers themselves — estimate that up to half the votes cast in certain precincts in some elections are bought. Between 1980 and 1982, the state police investigated allegations of vote fraud in 18 counties and concluded that illegal practices were large-scale, widespread, and organized.

◆ Illicit cash in huge amounts plays a vital role in the electoral process. No one knows how much cash flows in an election year, but politicians who take it and spend it estimate that the actual cost of some races is 50 percent to 100 percent higher than the figures actually reported.

The difference is cash: cash contributed because the donors either got something illicit in return or else didn't want their largesse publicized; and cash spent by politicians on such illegal activities as buying votes. "You cannot win an election up here without election day money, and cash is all they use," Letcher Circuit Judge F. Byrd Hogg said. Cash donations in excess of \$100 are illegal.

During his successful 1985 campaign for Perry County judge-executive, Sherman Neace reported spending more than \$107,000. Neace doled out nearly \$92,000 of that amount in cash to about two dozen political operatives, who were told only that he wanted their support and to carry their precincts. Darrel Fugate, one of the recipients and a well-known election manipulator, admits that he spent the \$3,000 Neace gave him to buy votes.

## UP IN ARMS

Unless public attitudes change, changes may be a long time coming. The existing corruption is condoned, if not encouraged, from the precinct level to the governor's office. Politicians — those responsible for changing the status quo — are the ones who profit from it. "It'll never change until people rise up in arms," Hogg said.



voice an opinion — 31 of 45 — believe political favoritism influences contract awards. Perhaps that is why architects and engineers are roughly 60 percent of the more than 200 members of the Democratic Party's Century Club, willing to pay \$1,000 or more a year to sip cocktails with the governor and other high state officials. Five engineering firms that have received more than \$50 million worth of personal-service contracts under the Collins administration donated a total of at least \$85,000 to her 1983 campaign or

## Election Day in Magoffin County

Like an old-time Army paymaster, Don Bailey stands with a fistful of \$5 and \$10 bills as the crowd gathers eagerly around him. Red-white-and-blue John Y. Brown Jr. campaign buttons adorn his hat and hang from his shirt pockets. A woman thrusts out a hand and receives several bills.

It is primary day in Magoffin County.

Several hundred feet away, a line is forming in front of Lakeville's polling place, an unpainted wooden building with open windows and door. As the voters advance into the building, they are watched through a window. Several times the observer turns and walks toward Bailey with someone who has just voted. The observer points to the voter and nods. Bailey hands the voter a bill.

The scene is repeated several times before Bailey spots a reporter in the crowd. Just paying campaign workers, Bailey says, adding, "Some people may call it vote-buying. I call it 'vote-hauling'" — paying supporters to bring voters to the polls. He's not very persuasive, especially after he moves behind a parked vehicle and continues handing out cash.

The next day, smarting from Brown's loss in the Democratic primary for governor, Bailey talks openly about his vote-buying, which he says is essential to compete in Magoffin County politics. A liquor store owner, he acknowledges paying people to vote for Brown. He says his primary election day observer was making sure voters didn't let anyone in the booth with them.

Bailey claims that backers of Lexington businessman Wallace Wilkinson, who defeated Brown and three other major candidates, teamed up with Republicans in the county to pick election officers and thereby control the outcome. Some election officers were going into the booths with voters, he says. "They just robbed it," he fumes. "They took it, stole it, bought it."

Here's how primary election day unfolded in several other precincts in Magoffin County.

Two women and a man sit outside the Flat Fork polling place at Prater-Border School around 7 a.m. The polls have been open an hour. "They're floaters," says Will Isaac, a strip-mine foreman who agreed to be a tour guide for the day. "Floaters" sell their votes to the highest bidder.

"How can you tell?"

"Well, you see, they're not voting," Isaac says. "They're just sitting around and waiting till the price goes up." Isaac, who lives in the precinct and who claims to have bought a fair number of votes himself, talks to a few vote-buyers inside the school. "They're only offering \$10 a vote," he reports.

The Magoffin County Courthouse is buzzing at 9 a.m. At least 100 people are milling about in the hallways. Election officers can be seen escorting voters into the booth and look-

ing over their shoulders as they vote. Nell Bailey, Don Bailey's wife, complains that some officials are disregarding election laws by not requiring people who receive assistance to sign affidavits. She says the election officers are Wilkinson supporters who are stealing votes for him by helping voters who can't read.

There is evidence that Brown supporters are breaking election laws, too. In the hallway, there is a hushed conversation between a Brown supporter and a man and a woman getting ready to vote. "Now who do you want me to vote for again?" the man asks.

"John Y. Brown," the Brown supporter replies, exasperation in his voice. The two voters do as they're told and return. They walk down the hallway with the Brown worker, who hands the woman what appears to be money, and then they hurriedly leave the courthouse.

At the Bloomington precinct, election officer Lauren Helton is raising Cain. He says election officers are going into the booth with voters who ask for assistance but don't need it. A supporter of Lt. Governor Steve Beshear, he claims the election officers — Wilkinson backers — are violating the law. "I'm not going to sign the [election] book," he says repeatedly.

Former Magoffin County Sheriff Thomas "Skip" Salyer, a Republican closely aligned with Wilkinson backers and who served time in a federal penitentiary for a 1981 vote-fraud conviction, tells Helton a voter can allow anyone to accompany him into the voting booth. Helton is unconvinced. He resigns as election officer but makes no formal complaint, explaining later that he is afraid for his safety and that it would be useless anyway. He tells of an incident earlier in the day in which two men showed up before the polls opened and wanted to vote. They were drunk and they had a gun. "They said they wanted to shoot me," he says. Magoffin County School Superintendent Carter Whitaker, an election officer, calmed them down after they voted. Both received help in voting after swearing in affidavits that they were drunk.

At the Ward II precinct in the county seat of Salyersville, L.C. Arnett, a man of tremendous girth, stands outside the polling place at the community center. All the windows are covered with dark plastic garbage bags, and election officers are permitting only one or two people to enter the room at a time.

Arnett, who is there to buy votes for Brown, says he's afraid to send people inside to vote. "I paid for 18 votes and sent them home," he says. "I don't mind paying for them, but I don't want to pay for them and have somebody else steal them."

Will Isaac sympathizes. "It used to be when you bought a vote it was yours."

—R.W.

Reform-minded citizens who might press for reforms — if only they could conquer the corruption and win public office — are becoming disillusioned and forsaking politics. Consider the case of Pete Shepherd, a Salyersville dentist with two children in the Magoffin County school system. Shepherd decided to run

for school board last year but lost in a race that he and others charge was rigged by vote-buyers. Now he vows never to seek elective office in the county again — unless outsiders "run the election."

Although no organized movement has developed, there are indications that the public would support changes. The news-

paper's poll found that a majority of Kentuckians are concerned about the high costs of campaigns and favor limits on the amounts candidates can raise and spend. A sizable majority also said they think candidates compromise their honesty and integrity at least occasionally in order to obtain campaign contributions.

However, in the past, even modest attempts to alter the system frequently have been thwarted. Curbs on PACs have been rejected, and suggested restrictions on political contributions by engineers aren't even discussed openly by the profession. At a time when some states were tightening the screws on campaign contributions, the 1986 General Assembly boosted the limit for individual contributions to \$4,000 from \$3,000.

The same legislative session limited the controversial practice of "post-election fund-raising" — a lucrative tool used by successful candidates to retire campaign debts. But the new law allows the

financial harvest to continue until the reaping politician takes office. In the weeks after the May primary, Wilkinson amassed contributions totaling \$1.9 million to help recoup money he had lent his campaign. The contributors included lawyers, engineers, architects, and others who traditionally do business with the state.

"I'm outraged by the General Assembly's passing that statute," said Owensboro attorney Morton Holbrook, a former registry member. "It's ideal for laying the heavy finger on people all over the commonwealth."

Historian Harry Caudill, an Eastern

Kentucky native and a frequent and strident critic of the state's political system, is convinced that the effort to effect sweeping changes must be two-pronged: arousing the slumbering business community to the crucial need for leadership, and blanketing precincts with state troopers on election day.

"We're locked into a corrupt system, and nobody thinks we can get out of it," Caudill said. "You cannot believe the audacity of people for whom politics is a way of life. If we don't get reform soon, Kentucky politics will be the playground of the rich and the bookkeepers who can do things nobody can figure out." □

# Philosophies Clash in Supreme Court Race

## CAMPAIGN REPORTING, DIVISION TWO

By Norman Oder  
The Charleston Gazette

*West Virginia's 1988 Supreme Court primary was the most expensive and hard-fought court election in state history. From January through June, Charleston Gazette reporter Norman Oder challenged the campaign rhetoric, examining the candidates'*

*records, and comprehensively analyzing the issues.*

CHARLESTON — The West Virginia Contractors Association has endorsed Kanawha Circuit Judges John Hey and Margaret Workman in the Democratic Supreme Court primary, as well as Republican Charlotte Lane. Why?

Responded executive director Mike Clowser: "Our board looked at the fact that the present Supreme Court spends more time making legislation and inter-

preting the law than acting upon the law itself."

Whoops! Clowser checked a press release and corrected his language: "Our board felt the Supreme Court has overstepped its authority and is making law instead of interpreting it."

Hey says he will interpret law, not make law. So does Marion County Circuit Judge Fred Fox, another Democratic challenger. Lane says she will "interpret — not write — laws." Workman says, "We expect judges to adhere to the law, following the law as it is, not as you'd like it to be."

What's the difference between interpreting law and making law?

None, says Robert Bastress, a professor at West Virginia University College of Law and a supporter of incumbent justices Darrell McGraw and Thomas Miller: "Every judge makes law, and if someone contends otherwise, that person is either lying or a fool. You have to take a constitution or statute that's written in general terms and apply it to specific facts and that involves lawmaking."

In CampaignSpeak, however, the words signify something. Candidates who say they will interpret law, not make it, suggest they might be less inclined to depart from previous judicial decisions to correct real or perceived wrongs. Also, they indicate they would be less inclined to invoke broad constitutional language to force state policy changes.

In other words, the challengers are suggesting a change in the court's direc-

Campaign Reporting: Division Two (Sunday circulation from 30,000 to 100,000)

**Second Prize:** Thomas Hargrove of the *Birmingham Post-Herald* for his computer analysis and narrative account of Alabama's widespread voter registration irregularities and absentee ballot abuses. **Third Prize:** John Anderson of the *Huntsville Times* for his profile of how the city and its space industry host lucrative fundraising events to win bigtime political friends.

tion. The court's detractors, pointing to its record on workers' compensation and other labor issues, blame it for being anti-business and infringing on the legislature's powers.

In the past 12 years, the West Virginia Supreme Court with incumbent justices Miller and McGraw has heard hundreds more cases than its predecessor, in the process reshaping West Virginia law and the court's role in making state policy. In the words of one of its supporters, Bill McGinley of the West Virginia Education Association, the court has been willing to "yank West Virginia into the 20th century."

Miller, for example, has prepared a list of more than 50 decisions he has written, including cases upholding people's rights to sue contractors for defective construction, preventing firing of whistle-blowing workers, and providing that the value of a woman's work as a homemaker be considered in a divorce settlement.

Before the 1970s, says West Virginia University professor Franklin Cleckley, the court often did not look to other state courts for guidance. In many areas, Cleckley says, West Virginia did not have a developed body of law.

The court has invoked the broad language of the state constitution to decide certain questions previously left to other branches of government. In 1979, the court ordered Special Judge Arthur Recht to develop standards to meet the state constitution's guarantee of a "thorough and efficient education." The legacy of the "Recht decision" — equalization of funding — is still being fought in the courts and legislature.

The court has been willing to take broad legislative language and interpret it creatively. In 1983, a few years before the country awakened to the homeless issue, McGraw wrote a decision making West Virginia the first state to order funding of emergency food, shelter, and medical care for the homeless. Justice Richard

Neely dissented angrily, saying the court was injecting itself into an issue outside its powers.

In a state where the legislature often has trouble passing a budget, the Supreme Court has taken on an increasingly high profile in deciding issues. For certain interest groups, the court race, with two candidates winning 12-year terms, seems more important than the governor's race. With Miller, McGraw, and Justice Thomas McHugh forming a 3-2 majority on several issues, the United Mine Workers and the West Virginia Education Asso-

embrace of unions and attacks on corporate evil. By denouncing right-to-work laws and calling a Chamber of Commerce meeting a "right-to-work rally," McGraw has violated judicial ethics, his opponents say.

Miller, though he often votes with McGraw, does not proclaim the same brand of populism, saying his satisfaction comes when he reaches the appropriate judicial opinion through research. As a trial lawyer for 20 years, Miller recalls, his greatest frustration was finding a Supreme Court unwilling to hear his appeals and update state law.

"I think the real debate is whether you want a court that is going to maintain a liberal bent, for lack of a better word, or whether you want a court that's going to be more deferential to legislative choice and the status quo," says Bastress. "This is a court that is not afraid to push the law in the direction it sees is most just."

Much of the time, the court acts with little controversy, but when existing law does not specify a solution, the judges — and their philosophies — weigh cases in other jurisdictions and split on the right policy: Can a coal miner sue his employer? Does a teacher deserve a grievance hearing? Is cancer compensable under workers' compensation? Is the property-tax system unfair?

The coal operators, businessmen, and corporate lawyers backing Fox, Hey, and Workman obviously hope the candidates will help "balance" the court, making it more sympathetic to business. The five challengers —

the three Democrats and Republicans Lane and Jeniver Jones — have each indicated they would be more likely to vote with the incumbents Neely and William Brotherton.

Though judicial candidates are prohibited from commenting on pending judicial issues, some have criticized past court decisions. Nearly every candidate denounces McGraw's decision to allow



Illustration by Ken Mowry, *Charleston Gazette*

ciation warn, "We're only one justice away from injustice."

### TIPPING THE BALANCE

A self-described "people's judge," McGraw, who grew up in Wyoming County coal country, says court systems have traditionally favored the powerful. He is admired and detested for his open



judges to claim previous governmental service, including his own work as a janitor at West Virginia University, to qualify for a pension. Few McGraw supporters defend the opinion on legal grounds. Even Miller, in a later opinion, said part of the decision should have been left to the legislature — which later modified the judicial pension system. Lane and Fox think the court should have left the *Recht* school-funding case to the legislature, saying the case was an example of the proper result by improper means.

Fox and Hey, both known for stiff sentencing, cite a Miller decision that says judges cannot imprison people for criminal contempt of court without a jury trial. That decision provides greater protection to individuals than the U.S. Constitution. Hey says it has made his job harder, that he was prevented from throwing a defendant who cursed him into jail. Miller says a trial judge's power to imprison someone in such a case is a dangerous weapon because the judge cannot be objective.

Nearly all the challengers have called the court's record on workers' compensation anti-business, while lawyers for workers say the court is needed to counteract the biased Workers' Compensation Appeals Board appointed by Republican Governor Arch Moore. More than one-third of the court's docket in 1987 was workers' compensation cases. The Supreme Court said the board was wrong in 307 out of 351 appeals by employees. On the other hand, the court refuses to hear more than half the cases presented, effectively denying them.

## NOWHERESVILLE

McGraw calls his Democratic opponents "Republicans" and warns that electing any of them will take the court back to "nowheresville," a time when the court closed its doors to people seeking relief. In 1976, the court heard only 75 cases. It heard 775 last year, though more than a third were workers' compensation appeals. McGraw and Miller say they are proud to be on an "active" court willing to consider issues and change the law. Workman doesn't agree with that term. Her objection, she says, is not that the judges hear more cases, but that they are "activist."

Says Fred Holroyd, a lawyer who is a labor consultant to management, "You've got the Supreme Court taking all the cases in the country and saying, 'Here are the most liberal and we want to

put them in West Virginia' ... when we ought to be going the other way."

Fox says of the court's record, "I think the idea that the Supreme Court hears more cases is probably good. But, by the same token, I think you can go over-



Photos courtesy Charleston Gazette

**THOMAS MILLER AND MARGARET WORKMAN, WINNERS IN THE RACE FOR THE WEST VIRGINIA SUPREME COURT.**

board." He adds, "I agree with them on a lot more cases than I disagree with them." However, Fox believes the court is "far to the left in terms of being pro-worker and anti-business."

Hey paints himself as the harshest critic of the court's record. Alone among the candidates, Hey calls the Supreme Court the prime culprit in the state's eco-

nomie decline — an assertion few court critics have made. He believes the pre-1976 court did a good job. "I think they were performing the proper functions of an appellate court. I don't think this court is. I think this court is totally politicized," he says.

## MAKING LAW

Where to draw the line between judging and legislating? In 1981, Neely, no great friend of the court majority, wrote a book on the topic. "It is a book about whether courts should make law in the broadest, grandest, political sense," Neely wrote in *How Courts Govern America*. "The reason that this book must be written is that courts do, in fact, make law in what often appears to be a lawless process."

In interviews, Hey, Fox, Workman, and Lane have each said the responsibility for writing laws is up to the legislature. "Even if they were the lousiest legislators in the world ... that does not give the judiciary the right to occupy their powers," says Workman.

But that's not the way it works in the real world, Neely writes. The classic example of a court "making law" was the U.S. Supreme Court's 1954 decision outlawing school segregation. And in the 1960s, the U.S. Supreme Court consistently "made law" by interpreting the Constitution to give criminal suspects more rights, such as requiring police officers to tell them they had the right to remain silent and consult a lawyer.

Legislatures, faced with a limited agenda, leave certain issues to the courts, Neely points out. In reviewing common law handed down in previous judicial decisions, courts may look at changing societal standards. In 1963, the California Supreme Court was the first to decide that people injured by defective products had to prove only that the product was defective — rather than that it was made negligently.

By 1976, 37 state supreme courts and four legislatures had made similar decisions. It took West Virginia until 1979, when Miller wrote a decision in *Morningstar vs. Black and Decker*. Backers of the present justices cite cases like this to show how slow the pre-1976 court was to accept change.

*In the primary, Thomas Miller led the field, followed by Margaret Workman. Darrell McGraw, who placed third, lost his seat on the court. Miller and Workman went on to win in November. □*

# The Color of Money

## INVESTIGATIVE, DIVISION ONE

By Bill Dedman

*The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*

Atlanta Journal-Constitution writer Bill Dedman showed that the city's largest banks and savings and loan associations were not making home loans in predominantly black neighborhoods. The series, which appeared May 1-4, 1988, was one impetus for Georgia's first county-sponsored fair-housing ordinance. In addition, Atlanta's largest banks announced they would provide \$65 million in low-interest loans for home purchases and home improvements, targeting Atlanta's mostly black Southside. The city's black ministers, deeming this insufficient, are campaigning to shift black deposits to black institutions.

ATLANTA — Whites receive five times as many home loans from Atlanta's banks as blacks of the same income — and that gap has been widening each year, an *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* study of \$6.2 billion in lending shows. Race — not home value — consistently determines the lending patterns of metro Atlanta's largest financial institutions.

Among stable neighborhoods of the same income, white neighborhoods always received the most bank loans per 1,000 single-family homes. Integrated neighborhoods always received fewer. Black neighborhoods — including the mayor's — always received the fewest.

"The numbers you have are damning.

Those numbers are mind-boggling," said Frank Burke, chief executive officer of Bank South. "You can prove by the numbers that the Atlanta bankers are discriminating against the central city."

As part of a five-month study, the *Journal-Constitution* used lenders' reports to track home-purchase and home-improvement loans made by every bank and savings and loan association (S&L) in metro Atlanta from 1981 through 1986 — 100,000 loans. In the white areas, lenders made five times as many loans per 1,000 households as in black areas. With banks largely absent, home finance in metro Atlanta's black areas has become the province of unregulated mortgage companies and finance companies, which commonly charge higher interest rates.

Among the other findings of the *Jour-*

*nal-Constitution's* examination of home finance:

◆ Banks and S&Ls return an estimated nine cents of each dollar deposited by blacks in home loans to black neighborhoods. They return 15 cents of each dollar deposited by whites in home loans to white neighborhoods.

◆ The offices where Atlanta's largest banking institutions accept home-loan applications are almost all located in predominantly white areas. Most S&Ls have no offices in black areas.

◆ Several banks have closed branches in areas that shifted from white to black. Some banks are open fewer hours in black areas than in white areas.

◆ According to information volunteered by two of the largest lenders, black applicants are rejected about four times as often as whites.

◆ A black-owned Atlanta bank, which makes home loans almost exclusively in black neighborhoods, has the lowest default rate on real-estate loans of any bank its size in the country.

The difference in bank lending to whites and blacks in metro Atlanta did not surprise some government observers. "I think it's obvious that some areas of At-

## "If I Can't Get a Loan, What Black Person Can?"

When he went to the banks last year looking for contributions for his 1989 mayoral race, Michael Lomax picked up a donation from every one. He wishes he'd done as well when he wanted a loan.

The Fulton County Commission chairman says he had to go to three banks to get a loan to add a guest house in Adams Park, an upper-middle-class black neighborhood. "The first reaction from the bank was, 'Why do you want to invest that much money in that neighborhood?'"

"If I, a powerful black elected official, can't get a loan, what black person can?" Lomax asks.

James Fletcher said he couldn't — at least not from a bank. The 56-year-old retired Southern Railway laborer needed \$5,000 to fix the roof on his house in a lower-income black neighborhood in Southwest Atlanta. In 1984 he went to Citizens and Southern Bank (C&S), his bank for 10 years. "They said they didn't make no house loans. They didn't let us fill out the papers."

### Investigative Reporting, Division One (Sunday circulation over 100,000)

**Second Prize:** Mike Hudson, *Roanoke Times* and *World-News*, for his four-part series on the failure of Virginia's juvenile justice system.

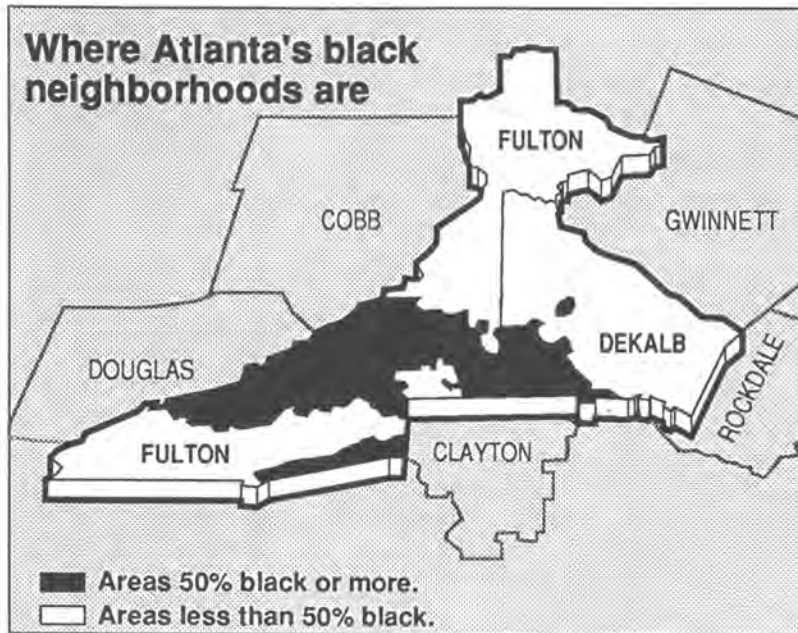
**Third Prize:** Robert T. Garrett, Al Cross, Ben Z. Hershberg, and William Keesler of the *Louisville Courier-Journal* for their documentation of monumental abuses by strip-mining firms. **Other Finalists:** Fred Schulte, Robert McClure, and Rick Pierce of Fort Lauderdale's *News/Sun-Sentinel* for revealing the political clout and illegal activities of the nation's two largest waste treatment companies. Tim Smith for his comprehensive *Greenville News* series on cocaine in South Carolina, from the drug dealers to the judicial system's failure to slow the flow. Frye Gaillard, Elizabeth Leland, Ricki Morell, Mae Israel, Tammy Joyner, Bruce Henderson, Ed Martin, and Kathleen McClain for their *Charlotte Observer* series on racial inequities in county high schools and "separate and unequal" life in the city. Bob Anderson and Mike Dunne for back-to-back series in the *Baton Rouge Morning Advocate* on cancer-causing air emissions and wetland-destroying brine released by the state's oil, gas, and petrochemical operations. Eleven reporters at the *Greensboro News & Record* who exposed continuing discrimination in the city's politics, housing, schools, workplace, and social environment.



# THE COLOR OF MONEY

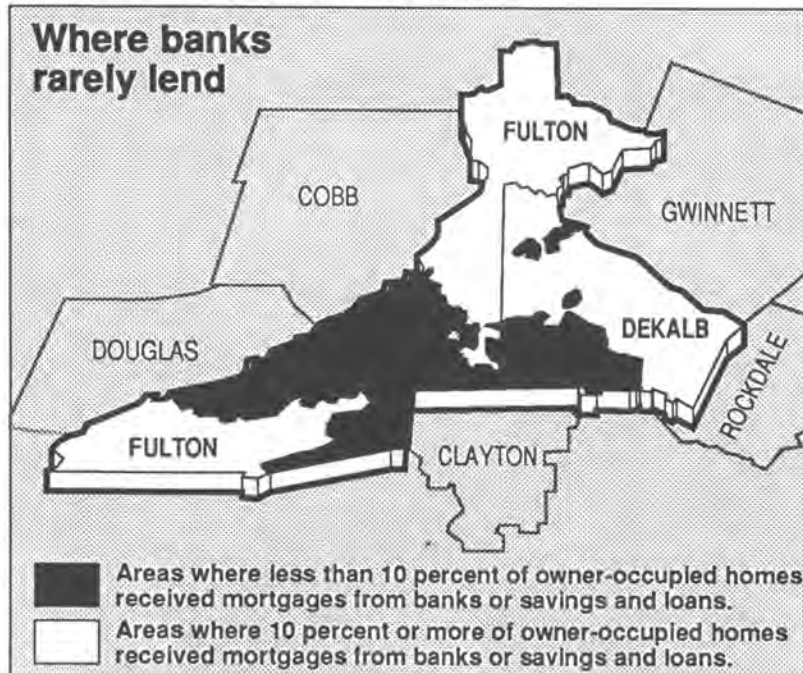
First of four parts

## Where Atlanta's black neighborhoods are



Source: 1980 U.S. Bureau of the Census figures

## Where banks rarely lend



Source: Federal Financial Institutions Examination Council figures for 1981-86

Map courtesy The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

lining is an illegal practice of refusing to lend in certain neighborhoods on the basis of race, ethnic composition, or any standards other than credit-worthiness. The term comes from the practice of drawing a red line on a map around certain neighborhoods to designate them as off-limits.

## MEASURING RACE

The impact of race on lending patterns was easier to measure in metro Atlanta than in some other cities, since housing patterns almost always follow racial lines here and since Atlanta has a substantial and identifiable black middle class. The study focused mainly on 64 middle-income neighborhoods: 39 white, 14 black, and 11 integrated. Middle income was defined as between \$12,849 and \$22,393 in 1979, the base year for the 1980 census. The study was controlled to ensure that neighborhoods were comparable in income and housing growth. All judgments about which data to include were made conservatively.

Even with these controls, distinct and growing differences appeared. Banks and S&Ls made 4.0 times as many loans per 1,000 single-family structures in white neighborhoods as in comparable black neighborhoods in 1984, 4.7 times as many in 1985, and 5.4 times in 1986.

Banking officials, while not questioning the accuracy of the figures, offered a variety of explanations. Some cited the aging of structures in the city. "Much of the housing in predominantly black areas is substandard, requiring rehabilitation to qualify for mortgage lending," said Willis Johnson, spokesman for Trust Company Bank. "As a result, this cannot be handled through conventional mortgage lending channels."

Officials at Atlanta's black-owned bank disagreed. "I have difficulty believing that most of the housing in black neighborhoods is substandard," said Ed Wood, executive vice president of Citizens Trust. "People who come from outside are amazed: 'Black folks got these kinds of houses here?'"

Several banking officials said the differences might be caused by more home sales in white areas. The bankers were partly right. To check the demand, the newspaper analyzed real-estate records of all home sales in 1986 in 16 of the 64 middle-income neighborhoods. Homes did sell twice as often in white areas as in black areas. But of the homes that were sold, banks and S&Ls financed four times

lanta have more trouble than others getting credit," said Robert Warwick, vice president of the Federal Home Loan Bank of Atlanta, which regulates savings institutions.

"It's institutional racism," said city council president Marvin Arrington. "While we are patting each other on the back about being a great city and a city too busy to hate, they're still redlining." Red-

as many in the white areas as in the black areas. In white areas, banks and S&Ls made 35 percent of the home loans. In black areas, banks and S&Ls made nine percent.

Even lower-income white neighborhoods received more of their loans from banks than did upper-middle-income black neighborhoods. Lower-income white neighborhoods received 31 percent of their loans from banks and S&Ls. Upper-middle-income black neighborhoods received 17 percent.

In Cascade Heights, where Mayor Andrew Young and other prominent blacks live, 20 home-purchase loans were made in 1986. Of those, two were made by banks and S&Ls and two by mortgage companies owned by banks. The rest were made by unaffiliated mortgage companies.

If sales differences do not account for most of the lending pattern, banking officials said, then the number of applications probably would. While federal law does not require financial institutions to make public the number of applicants of each race, nor the number from each area, two of the 88 institutions in the study agreed to divulge application figures by race. These figures, from the largest savings institutions in Georgia, suggest blacks submitted proportionately fewer loan applications than whites, but they also show that black applicants for home-purchase loans are rejected four times as often as whites.

In 1987 Georgia Federal rejected 241 of 4,990 white applicants — 5 percent — but 51 of 238 black applicants — 21 percent. From 1985 through 1987, Fulton Federal Savings and Loan rejected 1,301 of 12,543 white applicants — 10 percent — but 363 of 1,022 black applicants — 36 percent.

## IT'S THE LAW

Equitable lending practices are required under the Community Reinvestment Act, which says banks and S&Ls have "continuing and affirmative obligations to help meet the credit needs of their local communities, including low- and moderate-income neighborhoods, consistent with safe and sound operation." The law strives for a balance. Banks and S&Ls should protect the money of depositors and make a profit for shareholders, but it also says they should seek that profit in every neighborhood. Federal appeals courts have said banking is so "intimately connected with the public

interest that the Congress may prohibit it altogether or prescribe conditions under which it may be carried on."

Bankers said they bend over backward to obey the laws, and some said they are eager to make more money in black areas. "If I could make \$10 million or \$20 million in these loans, I'd make them," said Thomas Boland, vice-chair of First Atlanta. "I don't think a black borrower brings me any more risk per se." But First Atlanta placed last in the *Journal-Constitution's* ranking of 17 banks and S&Ls based on the percentage of home loans made to minority and lower-income neighborhoods. It placed 12th of 14 institutions based on lending to comparable

middle-income black and white areas.

Only the city's two black-owned financial institutions, Citizens Trust Bank and Mutual Federal Savings and Loan, made more home loans in black areas than white. These institutions, although small, appeared not to be suffering for lending mostly to blacks. Citizens Trust had a lower default rate on real-estate loans than the six largest banks in the city and the lowest of any bank its size in the country in 1986, according to the Federal Financial Institutions Examination Council, a government agency that produces reports for bank examiners. "I don't see our default ratio being any higher because we're working in the black community,"

## A History of Bias

Lending money to home buyers is an expression of faith — in the borrower, in the property, in the neighborhood. In the United States, such questions historically have been influenced by race.

That influence used to be easily defined — with a list. In 1933, Homer Hoyt, a respected University of Chicago economist, published a list ranking racial groups according to their influence on property values:

1. English, Scottish, Irish, Scandinavians
2. North Italians
3. Bohemians or Czechs
4. Poles
5. Lithuanians
6. Greeks
7. Russians, Jews (lower class)
8. South Italians
9. Negroes
10. Mexicans

The next year, the federal government hired Hoyt to develop the first criteria for who is a good credit risk for the new Federal Housing Administration. His list wasn't included, but warnings on racial influence were.

The same views were included in the first text of the American Institute of Real Estate Appraisers in 1933, which warned appraisers of the harm to property values caused by the "infiltration of inharmonious racial groups." As late as 1975, the list appeared in the bible of appraising, *McMichael's Appraising Manual*. The prevailing racism was institutionalized in the rules of bankers and real-estate agents as well. The National Association of Realtors' code of behavior forbade members from selling homes in white areas to minority buyers.

These racial views persisted through the civil rights era. In 1975, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's publication *The Dynamics of Change* defined racial change, or the fear of racial change in nearby neighborhoods, as the most significant predictor of "incipient decline."

As late as 1977, it took a lawsuit from the U.S. Justice Department before such racial standards were purged from guidelines of the Society of Real Estate Appraisers, the Mortgage Bankers Association of America, the American Institute of Real Estate Appraisers, and the United States League of Savings Associations. Appraisers opposed the settlement, contending their right to free speech was abridged if they could not consider the effect of race. —B.D.

said Wood of Citizens Trust. "I wouldn't be in banking if I gave money away."

On the other hand, several institutions that ranked poorly in the lending study capture the largest share of black customers, according to a 1986 study for the *Journal-Constitution*. First Atlanta, Trust Company, Citizens and Southern (C&S), and First American accounted for more than half the black customers.

In all, metro Atlanta's blacks have an estimated \$765 million deposited in financial institutions. That estimate is made by multiplying the number of non-white households in a 15-county metro area (204,802, according to the U.S. Census Bureau) by national black households' average balance at financial institutions (\$3,734, according to a 1984 Census Bureau survey.)

The banks and S&Ls appear to invest little of black deposits in home loans to black neighborhoods. In middle-income black neighborhoods, each single-family home received an average of \$339.27 in home-purchase loans from banks and S&Ls in 1986. Using the census estimate of \$3,734 in deposits per black household, that's an estimated 9.1 cents loaned on each deposited dollar.

In middle-income white neighborhoods surveyed, each single-family structure received an average of \$2,432.82 in home-purchase loans. That's an estimated 13.7 cents on the dollar in lending.

"We're talking about disinvestment, capital flight from the Southside," said Sherman Golden, assistant director of the Fulton County Department of Planning and Economic Development. "Southside residents put money in the bank and pay taxes, but their money is spent on the Northside."

## HURTING THE POOR

Although the study focused on middle-income neighborhoods, the results concern groups working to solve Atlanta's shortage of decent housing for the working class and the poor, regardless of race. "As long as they won't lend in Cascade Heights, I don't know how we'll get them to lend in Cabbagetown or Ormewood Park or Pittsburgh or South Atlanta," said Lynn Brazen, a director of the Georgia Housing Coalition. "We're not asking the banks to do anything that's not banking. We just want them to make money on the Southside, too," Brazen said.

"It takes money to make money. The problem we have in the black community

is there is no base with which to make money," said the Reverend Craig Taylor, a white Methodist minister and Southside housing developer.

Neighborhoods say they need investment by financial institutions more than ever because federal housing aid is rapidly dwindling — from \$33 billion in 1980 to less than \$8 billion in 1987, according to the National Association of Realtors. Atlanta's share of federal housing and community development money dropped from \$8 million in 1983 to \$4 million last year. The city earmarked half of that money for its tourist-entertainment complex, Underground Atlanta.

Without equal access to credit, community leaders say they watch their neighborhoods slide. When people can-

not borrow money to buy or fix up houses, property values decline. Real-estate agents direct their best prospects elsewhere. Appraisers hedge their bets by undervaluing property. Businesses close. Home owners sell to speculators.

Redlining and disinvestment were hot issues in the mid-1970s, when Congress approved disclosure laws and the Community Reinvestment Act. A decade later, activists claim red lines are being redrawn, and Congress is considering legislation to enhance enforcement of the law. "Let's face it: redlining hasn't disappeared," said Senator William Proxmire (D-Wisconsin), chairman of the Senate Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Committee. "Neighborhoods are still starving for credit."

# The Big Thirst

## INVESTIGATIVE, DIVISION TWO

By Peter Brock  
*El Paso Herald-Post*

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*For its six-part series on water issues, the El Paso Herald-Post conducted research and interviews in Texas, New Mexico, and Chihuahua, Mexico. "The Big Thirst" appeared April 18-23, 1988.*

EL PASO — A devastating man-made drought awaits El Paso's entry into the 21st century. Unless more water is found, the drought will occur with the depletion

of the city's main source of fresh water by 2032 — or sooner.

The fear of a waterless future already embroils El Paso and New Mexico in a desperate, decade-old water war, and there's no retreat or victory in sight for either side. In addition, a hidden battle for water under the arid Southwestern desert — documented and encouraged by the U.S. State Department — rages between El Paso and Juarez, Mexico. Both cities are pumping their main water supplies out of the same underground source.

The deep Hueco Bolson, situated between the Franklin and Hueco mountains,

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Investigative Reporting: Division Two (Sunday circulation from 30,000 to 100,000)

**Second Prize:** Paul J. Nyden of the *Charleston Gazette* for his almost daily revelations of the chicanery and pitifully weak regulation of the coal industry in West Virginia. **Third Prize:** Jamie Lucke and Ted Bryant of the *Birmingham Post-Herald* for tackling the Alabama tax structure and examining its inequities and areas for reform. **Other Finalists:** Mark Neikirk, Debra Ann Vance, T.C. Brown, Connie Remlinger, and William Weathers of the *Kentucky Post* for documenting rampant cronyism, vote buying, and educational mismanagement among county school boards. Billy Cox for his gripping stories in *Florida Today* on the "atomic veterans" who were at Ground Zero during various nuclear bomb tests — and who now suffer health problems alone, without government admission of culpability.

was hailed as a 200-year water supply 30 years ago. But it may not last another 30 years at the present rate of furious pumping by El Paso and Juarez, some experts say. "Right now, it's a battle of turbine pumps," says Albert Utton, a law professor at the University of New Mexico and editor of the *Natural Resources Journal*.

In Juarez, children die of dehydration each summer. It is a tragedy that is accepted as routine in areas where minimal needs for sanitary drinking water and sanitary sewer systems surge far ahead of the ability of the Mexican government to meet the needs. "Up until 1986, diseases due to dehydration and sanitation problems were the number one cause of pediatric and adult deaths," says Dr. Emmanuel Apodaca, a physician with the Pan American Health Organization.

In El Paso, water consumption is about 190 gallons a person daily. That's four times more than the per-person amount for Juarez, and despite looming dramatic conservation efforts in El Paso, the gap is expected to widen.

However, disease and the deterioration of El Paso's quality of life are not deflected by international or municipal boundaries, say state and local health officials, who point out that epidemics result from polluted drinking water sources and supplies. The threat to health clearly exists among the swelling number of poor people who live just beyond the El Paso city limits.

## WATER WARS

"Whiskey's fer drinkin' — water's fer fightin'." So goes an old saying that overromanticizes the bitter water feuds of the Old West. One feud led to the unsolved murder a hundred years ago of the harmless hermit Francois Jean Rochas, who

homesteaded beneath the wild and rocky crags of Dog Canyon, 80 miles north of El Paso. The little Frenchman sparingly watered his cattle and small orchards from a tiny stream that still trickles down the

canyon. Rochas' envious neighbor was the powerful rancher and future New Mexico political giant Oliver Lee. Law officers never solved the Rochas murder; Lee eventually got his water.

Water wars escalated in the 20th century, and like armed conflicts, they produce not only casualties but also a variety of allies and activists. In this generation's water war, El Paso is fighting New Mexico. Mexico opposes the United States. U.S. farmers are fighting urban encroachment. Health officials oppose industrialists. Opponents of growth are fighting promoters of growth. Environmentalists fight regulations they consider to be lenient, while developers fight the same regulations as too rigid.

Former El Paso Mayor Fred Hervey,



Photo by Billy Calzada, El Paso Herald-Post

## Water Board Deep in Land

The Public Service Board oversees El Paso's consumption of about 33 billion gallons of water a year. It also owns vast land holdings — 35,189 acres — worth an estimated market value of more than \$60 million.

Almost all the land was bought during the 1950s to protect the city's future water supply, but after four decades the board is vulnerable to one recurring criticism: it has molded its municipal water management and distribution policies to fit its role as El Paso County's biggest land speculator. For 36 years, the five-member board has been dominated by contractors, developers, or other people with significant real-estate interests.

- ◆ The five-member board has never had fewer than two individuals with significant interests in real-estate development.
- ◆ Since 1982, four members have had backgrounds that involve real-estate holdings and development or clients with sizable real-estate developments.
- ◆ At least 14 of all 21 appointed members have been connected with real estate and development. The representation of developers during the aggregate 144 years of board membership amounts to 104 years.
- ◆ Of the 11 mayors who have been on the board, former Mayor Fred Hervey and incumbent Mayor Jonathan Rogers — both with established real-estate and development-connected careers — have accounted for 12 years.

Few criticisms meet with hotter rebuttals by present and some past board members than these: that the board perpetuates itself mainly for the benefit of real-estate developers, and that the board is motivated by development.

In his sixth year on the board, attorney Ellis Mayfield denies board favoritism toward development interests. "It's just generally not so," he says. "The developers are the ones that make the primary demands on us for service — that's true. But how could it be otherwise? ...

"When they set up a new subdivision and it's in the city, we have to provide the service to them. So, it's logical that they [critics] will say that we are controlled by the developers. And, I guess, in effect we are. We go where the business is. We have to go where the business is, and the developers are the business," Mayfield says.

However, several former mayors who were on the board say the influence of developers is excessive. "I've always felt that they [developers] shouldn't be on the board," says former Mayor Bert Williams, a board member from 1971 to 1973. "I felt they had an interest, and the question arises as to their partiality."

**AN EL PASO RESIDENT COUNTS HER MONEY BEFORE PAYING HER WATER BILL.**

credited with creating in 1952 the Public Service Board that oversees the water supply, thinks the crisis centers on quality and not quantity. "There's plenty of different kinds of water underground. It's enough to last 200 or 300 years. But it depends on how you treat it," Hervey says.

If El Paso loses the fight for New Mexico water, the city may be forced to begin expensive desalting of poorer-quality ground water. That would mean the next generation of El Pasoans will pay water bills at least 10 times higher than today's bills. Losing the fight would also drastically change the way El Pasoans live.

The Public Service Board already is preparing for that possibility, says board member Marshall St. John. "You'll see very strict water-conservation regulations and penalties for violating those rules," he predicts. "You will also see laws that require desert landscaping everywhere in town to cut down on water use. It will be drastic."

That is just the beginning. Economists and political scientists say that although the board boasts of providing water to El Pasoans at a "cheap" rate, the rate is a false one. "The next generation will have to pay much higher water bills to make up for the

'cheap' rates the board provides today to make the city attractive to growth and development," says Dr. Helen Ingram, a University of Arizona water politics expert. "It's a vicious circle: populations are doubling and tripling. There is accommodation for growth and development. Demands for water double and triple, and then it starts all over again."

Along with numerous other experts, Ingram testified during recent hearings in New Mexico against the Public Service Board's applications to drill 287 wells across the state line. The board's main water expert, Dr. Lee Wilson of Santa Fe, New Mexico, agreed with New Mexico's experts about the predicted demise of the Hueco Bolson in 2032. Wilson's research about groundwater pumping by El Paso and Juarez was presented to justify El Paso's need for New Mexico's groundwater.

Wilson says the pumping of the Hueco could be occurring up to 50 times faster than the bolson can be refilled. The Hueco is refilled by nature and with treated sewage water from the board's state-of-the-art plant in northeast El Paso. "So, it becomes real obvious what is going to happen," Wilson says.

"You're going to run out of water."

Actually, the major target of El Paso's continuing court duel with New Mexico isn't the Hueco Bolson but rather the untapped Mesilla Bolson, which runs north-south from New Mexico into Mexico on the west side of the Franklin Mountains. Various U.S. water experts predict Mexico will beat El Paso and New Mexico to heavy pumping of the bolson.

Law professor Utton and others warn of "disastrous" consequences of two situations: runaway groundwater pumping of the Mesilla and the lack of groundwater treaties between the United States and Mexico. "El Paso's water needs are accelerating, and Juarez needs more and more, and they need it now," says Professor Ryan Barilleaux, a former University of Texas-El Paso political scientist.

"They [Mexico] will soon begin drilling in the Mesilla Bolson. It's going to suck it out from under New Mexico real fast," Barilleaux says. "The same thing is going to happen in the Hueco Bolson. So in a few years, El Paso is going to cease to exist if it doesn't find a way to get some more water. It's not going to be easy. It's not like things are going to get better all of a sudden." □

# A Death in the Family

## INVESTIGATIVE, DIVISION THREE

By Peggy Roberts  
The Alabama Journal

Alabama has the highest infant death rate in the nation. In 1986, nearly 800 babies did not live to see their first birthday.

Faced with those statistics, The Alabama Journal investigated the state's infant-mortality crisis. More than 20 articles by Frank Bass, Emily Bentley, Susan Egger-

ing, and Peggy Roberts appeared September 14-18, 1987. The project was a major undertaking for a small newspaper, requiring thousands of staff hours and a considerable financial commitment. In one story, Peggy Roberts examined how Medicaid woes contribute to the crisis.

MONTGOMERY — Sixteen-year-old Terri's voice shook as she described her ordeal since she discovered she was pregnant

three months ago. "I'm overjoyed about it," she said, obviously more sadly determined than happy. "Maybe it'll change me. I was bad."

A diminutive girl dressed in a Montgomery high school drill-team sweatshirt with her nickname on the back, Terri is facing more exasperating problems than the average pregnant teenager. When she applied for Medicaid to cover her prenatal care and delivery, Terri first was told she didn't qualify. Although her mother, a single parent, has no work income, she wasn't eligible because her younger sister collects Social Security benefits.

Even when she got Medicaid, she couldn't find a doctor in Montgomery who would take her as a patient. With the

## Investigative Reporting: Division Three (Sunday circulation under 30,000)

**Second Prize:** Lois Norder of the *Shreveport Journal* for documenting the scandal of for-profit trade schools and the system that allows them to exploit rather than teach students. **Third Prize:** Frank Boyett of the *Kentucky Gleaner* for uncovering more than \$275,000 that area industries owed the local governments for uncollected in-lieu-of-tax payments. **Other finalists:** Donna Fielder of the *Record-Chronicle* in Denton, Texas for exposing the illegal activities of Sheriff Randy Kaisner, including revelations that led to his bribery conviction. Pam Moore of the *Salisbury Post* for probing the conflicting legal standards and human tragedy involved in placing mentally disturbed criminals in North Carolina.



**NINETEEN CHILDREN SHARE THE DILAPIDATED HOME OF MAMIE GENE NELSON, WHO LOST A TWO-MONTH-OLD SON TO PNEUMONIA LAST YEAR.**

number of delivering obstetricians in Alabama dwindling, it is getting tougher to find a doctor who will accept the minimal Medicaid payments. Medicaid in Alabama pays \$450 to deliver a baby. That includes six prenatal visits and the doctor's expenses in delivering the child. Doctors receive an average of \$2,000 for a delivery paid for by the patient or by private insurance.

Terri was disgusted and confused over her predicament. "I called every one of those doctors on the list they gave me, but nobody would take me," she said, choking on her words. She doesn't know if the obstetricians she called turned her down because she was too far along in her pregnancy or because there are too few obstetricians to care for the private patients willing to pay the entire fee.

She will continue to attend the Montgomery County Family Health Clinic, where she waits with 45 other women to see a volunteer doctor for a few

## *Pay Now or Pay Later*

Health experts say that while technological breakthroughs that save babies' lives are good, common-sense prevention approaches are being ignored. Here are the costs of waiting until after birth to provide health care:

- ◆ Number of women who could receive prenatal care for the average cost of one baby's stay in a neonatal care unit: **30**
- ◆ Cost of a normal delivery: **\$2,000**
- ◆ Cost of a delivery of a low-birth-weight baby with neonatal care: **\$5,200 - \$13,000**
- ◆ Cost of an extended stay in a neonatal unit: **\$14,000 - \$150,000**
- ◆ Yearly cost of residential care for a retarded or handicapped child: **\$37,500**
- ◆ Yearly cost for a regular classroom education for one child: **\$2,016**
- ◆ Yearly cost for a classroom education for a child with a hearing or speech impediment: **\$4,200**
- ◆ Amount saved for every dollar spent on prenatal care: **\$3.38**

moments. When Terri goes into labor, she'll go to the emergency room and be delivered by an obstetrician who knows neither her nor her medical history.

### **DOES MEDICAID AID?**

Health experts are worried that Alabama's Medicaid system is part of the reason infant mortality is so high. Each

year, teenagers like Terri fail to receive proper prenatal care and lose their babies before the infants reach age one.

The Medicaid system is fast becoming one of the most hotly debated issues in the state. While experts can't agree whether Medicaid reform is the answer to reducing the state's high infant mortality rate, they do agree the system needs changing. "The Medicaid system isn't helping many of those most in need," said Dr. Earl Fox, the state's health officer.

One option to expand Medicaid currently being considered in the legislature is participation in a federal program that would match three-to-one funds raised on the state level for the care of mothers and children. That suggestion, which has gained strong support among Alabama's physicians, would allow pregnant women who earn more than the \$1,416 annual limit allowed under the current Medicaid system to get medical



benefits during their pregnancies and for the first year of the baby's life.

For the present, however, to be eligible for Medicaid benefits in Alabama, a candidate must earn less than \$118 a month, or 16 percent of the poverty level as set by the federal government. And even women who are eligible often fall through the cracks. Nineteen-year-old Debbie Edwards earned \$75 a week as a waitress until she got too far along in her pregnancy to work. She had no health insurance, and although she took a leave of absence from her job, she isn't sure the job will be open when she is ready to go back to work.

However, Debbie was ruled ineligible for Medicaid. She probably would have gotten Medicaid coverage if she'd simply said she wasn't

working. "You have to know how the system works to make it work for you," remarked another woman at the Montgomery County clinic.

"I was four months along before I even knew I was pregnant," Debbie said.

The unemployed aren't the only ones passed over when the Medicaid money is doled out. Faye and Randy Ford, a Chisolm couple, had their third baby in mid-December, just 10 months after their second child was born.

"Some people say she might have been premature because she was so soon after Taylor Michelle, but the doctor didn't say for sure," Faye explained. The new baby didn't have extensive complications but was small and weak enough to require hospitalization for three weeks. When the Fords took their daughter home, they also took home a bill for \$15,000.

Neither Randy's job as a welder nor Faye's job in a Montgomery factory offered health benefits, and Faye said they don't earn enough to purchase a private insurance policy. "We had enough money saved to cover the cost of a regular delivery," she said. Now they're hoping to work out a monthly payment schedule that will allow them to pay their medical bills little by little, without devouring their total income. But it will take years.

### A SILENT TRAGEDY

Critics find little merit in the current system.

"It pays less than in any other state in the country," said Dr. Robert Beshear, a Montgomery pediatrician who has been active in trying to draw lawmakers' attention to the state's infant mortality problem. "It actually penalizes a poor family in which the parents are making an effort but maybe only earning a minimum wage and receiving no health benefits," he continued. "It seems to me that a system where a family who earns more than \$118 per month can't get assistance is tragic."

Beshear is especially critical of state officials who haven't made better mother and child

health care a priority. "They have no long-term vision when they say we don't need money for these programs," he said. "It's a great silent tragedy." □

## Portrait of a High-Risk Infant

### Prenatal Conditions:

◆ *Race:* The infant death rate for blacks is almost twice that for whites.

◆ *Age:* Women younger than 17 or older than 35 are more likely to lose babies.

◆ *Poverty:* Babies born to poor women are at a higher risk.

◆ *Number of births:* The risk is higher for a woman who has never had a baby or who has had more than four children.

◆ *Weight:* An underweight mother is more likely to have an underweight baby. A mother who was premature or weighed less than five pounds, five ounces at birth falls in the high-risk category.

◆ *Disease:* Diabetes or chronic hypertension contributes to risk.

◆ *Obstetrical history:* A mother who already has had a low-birth-weight baby or more than one spontaneous abortion is considered high risk.

◆ *Complications during pregnancy:* Bleeding, cervical problems, and other complications add to the risk.

◆ *Health:* Smoking, poor nutrition, and alcohol and drug abuse by the mother all endanger the health of the unborn child.

### Delivery Conditions:

◆ *Birth trauma:* Treating a patient in labor without a prenatal record is the highest risk factor. The delivering physician has no way of knowing what prenatal conditions are involved.

### Postnatal Conditions:

◆ *Abnormalities:* Heart and respiratory problems are most common in premature newborns.

◆ *Poor living conditions:* The environment to which the newborn goes home is important.

◆ *Health care:* Poor child care, lack of immunizations, and poor nutrition add risk.



She is receiving some prenatal care at the Montgomery County clinic, and when she is ready to have her baby, she'll go to the emergency room. Then she plans to take on two jobs to pay the hospital bills.

# THE LAST WORD

## UNWELCOME SURPRISE

I have been a supporter of the Institute for Southern Studies for most of the 11 years I have lived in the South. As a transplanted white liberal Yankee Catholic Democratic history professor at a historically black college in the black belt, I find in *Southern Exposure* a journal that shares my concerns for a progressive South.

I was, however, somewhat surprised at some of the content of the Fall 1988 issue. I believe that the rights of gays and lesbians deserve our attention and advocacy as do the rights of any people who have been the targets of discrimination in the South and elsewhere. The nature of some of the material you published, however, is not so much informative as it is salacious. This is especially true of Allan Troxler's interview with "Rabbit," which included both graphic descriptions of sexual activity as well as illustrations that could be considered by some to be little more than prurient.

I am strongly opposed to censorship, but I do not think that *Southern Exposure* is the proper vehicle for some of the more explicit material that appeared in your last issue. A subscriber to this journal should never have to worry about leaving his copy anywhere in his house. But I would be derelict as a parent of three elementary school children if I left this issue on the living room bookshelf. My greatest concern, however, is that you may lose the support of other progressive Southerners who might be more offended than I was by this issue.

Lee W. Formwalt  
Albany, Ga.

## PUFF PIECE

I am sure you will be receiving considerable comments about your new format and your Fall 1988 issue in particular. I am writing to register surprise that you would write a puff piece on Bayard Rustin.

Rustin, as you must know, was one of the leading anti-communist forces within the civil rights movement for decades. He supported the genocidal war against Vietnam. He even went so far as to support the Ian Smith regime in Rhodesia against the ZANU-ZAPU liberation forces. The fact that he happened to be gay should not detract from the fact that he happened to be reactionary politically. Otherwise, I will be expecting to read puff pieces on Jonas Savimbi, the UNITA bandit supported by South Africa, just because he happens to be black.

You should seriously ponder the editorial turn your publication is taking. Are you in the process of sacrificing progressive politics? I hope not.

Gerald Horne  
Santa Barbara, Calif.

## DON'T BE A DRAG

I could not believe my eyes when I read the cover of the Fall 1988 issue — "Mint Juleps, Wisteria, and Queens." In fact, my brain kept reading the last word as "queens," as in drag queens.

Please, let us not lose our sensitivity as we rush off "in some new direction." The other guys, including the white supremacist J.B. Stoner, do that quite well.

L.C. Perry  
Canton, Miss.

## 10,000 WORDS

The picture on the cover of your Fall 1988 issue of a black drag queen posing on the Charleston battery is worth 10,000 words. Congratulations on the issue.

Hastings Wyman Jr.  
Washington, D.C.

## MORE BOOKS

*Southern Exposure* is still an excellent periodical, and the editorial changes have added to its quality, with one exception. I am dismayed that you decided to scrap the section listing the latest books and dissertations about the South. I am writing a masters thesis on black-Indian contact in the Southeast, and this section introduced me to several excellent sources that I otherwise would not have known about.

Please do scholars the service of continuing to list recent books and dissertations about the South. The strength of *SE* has been its combination of journalism and scholarship, and it would be wrong to favor one over the other.

George Klos  
Tallahassee, Fla.

We welcome letters from our readers. Send your comments and criticisms to *The Last Word*, Southern Exposure, P.O. Box 531, Durham, NC 27702. Please be sure to include your name, address, and daytime telephone number, and try to hold letters to no more than 250 words. Longer letters may be edited for length.

## **Disease and Distinctiveness in the American South**

*Edited by Todd L. Savitt  
and James Harvey Young*

"[This book] brings together the work of seven prominent medical historians, to offer the most comprehensive discussion to date of the role of disease in creating a unique southern culture. Specialists and nonspecialists alike will read it with profit." —Ronald L. Numbers, University of Wisconsin

This volume illuminates how black medical problems, the rationale that underlay their treatment, and plantation medicine helped make the South distinctive.  
216 pages, illustrations, \$24.95

## **Urban Vigilantes in the New South Tampa, 1882-1936**

*Robert P. Ingalls*

"Equally important for historians of violence and vigilantism, of the New South, and of the Southern labor movement." —Roger Lane, Haverford College

Based on research in primary sources, this book concludes that Tampa's elite orchestrated the violence against immigrants, black, radicals, and union organizers to enforce dominant values and conserve the prevailing distribution of power.  
320 pages, illustrations, \$29.95

## **Afro-American Women of the South and the Advancement of the Race, 1895-1925**

*Cynthia Neverdon-Morton*

"What a welcome publication! Until now, no scholar has examined the massive contribution of black women's clubs to public life in America." —Karen J. Blair,

author of *The Clubwoman as Feminist*

Through a detailed examination of black clubwomen's activities in five states, the author reveals the origins of female networks with national importance during the Progressive era and beyond.  
352 pages, illustrations, \$34.95

## **Black Radicals and the Civil Rights Mainstream, 1954-1970**

*Herbert H. Haines*

"Movement scholars and activists should read this book. Haines demonstrates beyond a doubt that radicalism had a net beneficial effect on the victories of the civil rights movement. The radicals may generate backlash effects but, by pressuring elites, they pave the way for social change."

—J. Craig Jenkins,  
Ohio State University

Haines argues that expanding black radicalism enhanced the successes of mainstream organizations and furthered many of the goals pursued by moderate black leaders.  
224 pages, \$24.95

## **Andrew Johnson and the Negro**

*David Warren Bowen*

"Bowen has probed the working of Andrew Johnson's mind. His analysis illuminates the character of East Tennessee's tailor president and the contradictions—as well as the consistency—of his policies toward slavery and toward blacks."

—LaWanda Cox,  
author of *Lincoln and Black Freedom*

In his revisionist study, David Bowen explores Johnson's racist bias more deeply than other historians to date, and maintains that racism was, in fact, a prime motivator of his policies as a public official.  
256 pages, \$29.95



**The University  
of Tennessee Press**

**Knoxville 37996-0325**

Southern Exposure  
P.O. Box 531  
Durham, NC 27702