

Your Guide
to the South
25 YEARS

SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

A JOURNAL OF POLITICS & CULTURE

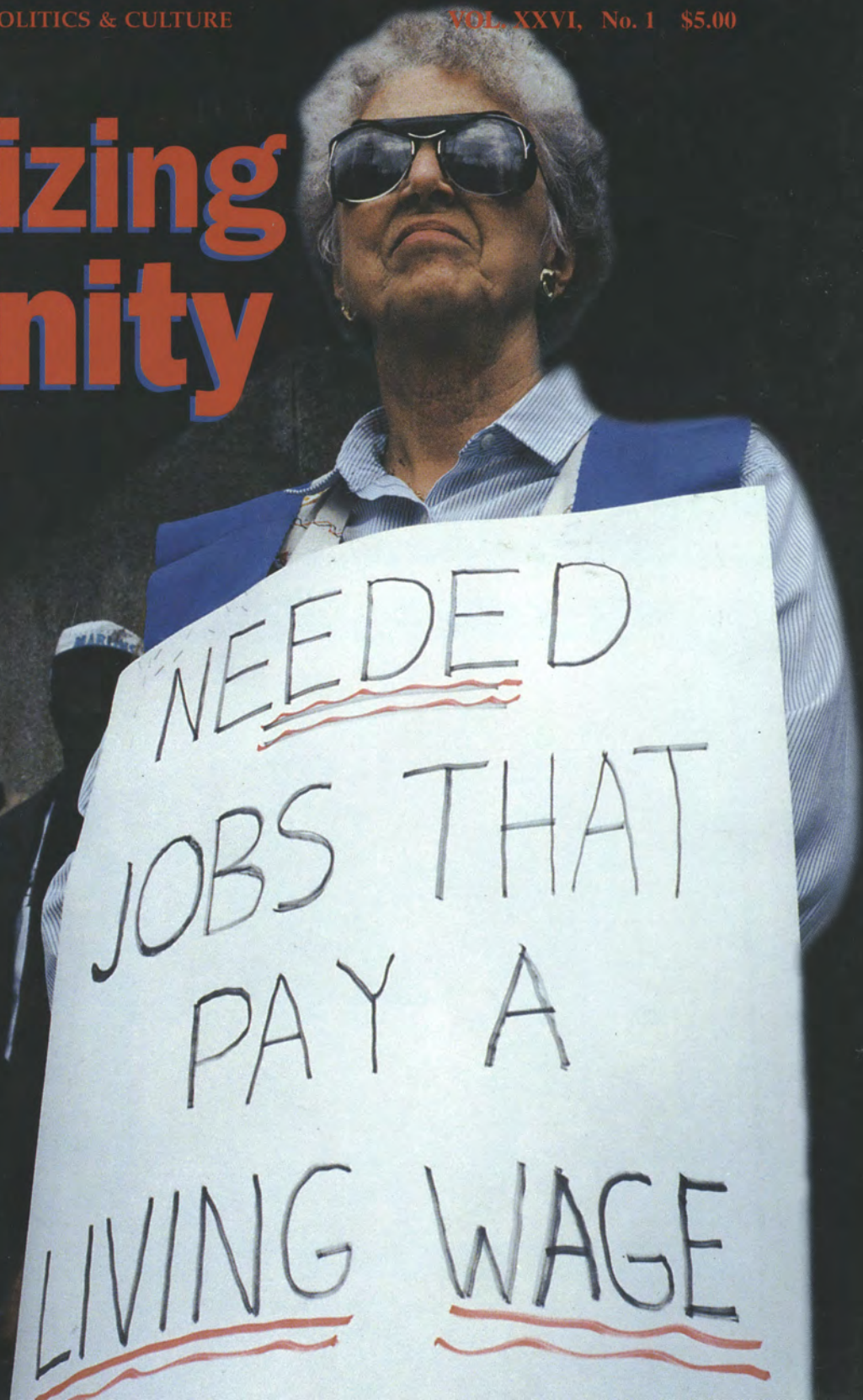
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Organizing for Dignity

The end of welfare as we know it has sparked a southern movement for economic justice. What lessons are activists learning?

Also:
**TRANSISTOR
POWER:**

*News from the
low-watt radio
revolution*



Organizing for Dignity



Special Institute Report

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By Keith Ernst and Kim Diehl

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SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

SPRING 1998

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From the Editor

Twenty-five years ago, the first edition of *Southern Exposure* rolled off the presses, the work of a handful of scholar-activists who had formed the Institute for Southern Studies in 1970 as a research arm for social movements. *Southern Exposure* and the Institute were clearly products of the hopes and dreams of an activist generation—but launching the magazine was an imminently practical decision. As one version of the story goes, the magazine was largely a way to create a healthy fear of deadlines among Institute staff, as only a magazine can.

But *Southern Exposure* grew to be much more. Over the years, it has become a powerful tool for informing activists and creating change. It has earned notoriety for its award-winning investigative journalism, oral history and analysis.

Perhaps most importantly, *Southern Exposure* has become a statement about the South — the fact that, for better and for worse, the South has emerged as a linchpin in national and world events. The magazine's pages detailed how the movement for black freedom shook the nation and inspired a generation; how the region's industrial boom, by using cheap labor, changed the lives of workers across the country. As *Southern Exposure* chronicled the South's catalyzing role, it put faces and figures to W.E.B. DuBois' prophetic statement: "As the South goes, so goes the country."

At *Southern Exposure* we've taken our 25th anniversary as a chance to step back and take stock. When has *Southern Exposure* been at its best over the years? When has it been not so good? What have we learned in the last quarter century? And how has the magazine contributed to the mission of the Institute, which is dedicated to "combining information power and people power to build a more just South?"

These are big questions, and we have looked in different places to find answers. We've turned to you, our readers, through surveys and face-to-face conversations, to learn what you have found interesting and useful — and what hasn't been so valuable. We've engaged dozens of past staffers, community leaders, journalists and other "change-makers" in long and often soul-searching conversations about our past and future. Personally, I've taken to holing up in the hidden corners of the office with piles of old *Exposures*, letting the lessons of the pages speak to me.

The overall themes are clear, and have been encouraging: countless people have found, and continue to find, *Southern Exposure* to be a valuable publication in understanding and working to change the South. People testified that the magazine informs and inspires; that at its best it has changed laws as well as changed lives.

People are equally clear about where we could do better. Sure, we cover serious issues, but does it have to be so dry? And many reminded us to keep our eyes on the prize of social change, and that *Southern Exposure* must always strive to be accessible and relevant to those working to make the South a better place.

We left many of these conversations feeling moved by the passion you have for the South and *Southern Exposure* — and the potential both hold.

As we celebrate our 25th anniversary, we thank all of you for your efforts to build a better South and a better *Southern Exposure*. We look forward to working with you, and carrying forward the hopes and dreams that gave birth to *Southern Exposure* 25 years ago, and inspire us as we look to the future. — *Chris Kromm*

"Southern Exposure
put faces and figures
to W.E.B. DuBois'
prophetic statement:
"As the South goes, so
goes the country."

Outrage of the Season

THE SANCTITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA'S WHITE RACE

The South Carolina Legislature has been plagued in recent years by simmering conflict over racially-charged symbols. From the long-standing struggle to remove the Confederate flag, which still flies on the statehouse, to plans for a monument honoring African Americans, the conflicts have exposed a state government deeply divided on racial grounds.

The latest flare-up came on Feb. 5th, when the South Carolina House voted to allow a referendum this fall on removing a state constitutional ban on interracial marriage. Such a legislative action was purely symbolic, as the prohibition was believed to be a vestige of another era. The Supreme Court ruled in 1967 that a similar Virginia law was unconstitutional.

Four lawmakers voted against the referendum, 99 voted for it and, most notably, 20 abstained. Even among those who voted for the bill, many disagreed with its motive. In interviews with Columbia's *State* newspaper and the alternative weekly *Free Times*, some lawmakers expressed reservations about removing the in-

terracial marriage ban.

"It's just my Christian belief that a good Southern Baptist ought not to do that (marry another race)," said Olin Phillips (D-Cherokee). "I just believe in the sanctity of the white race."

Phillips went on to say he was puzzled over why a white woman would be attracted to a black man. "Is it the athletics in the blacks?" he wondered. Phillips voted for the bill even though he disagrees with the motive, saying "let the people decide."

Rep. Lanny Littlejohn (R-Spartanburg) voted against the bill and explained that God created the different races for a reason, that "he set the races apart."

Rep. Larry Koon, a Republican who represents the affluent and very white areas of Lake Murray and Lexington, offered a scientific explanation of why the races should not intermarry. In the animal kingdom, according to Koon, different species don't mix. "You don't see any crossed sparrows and owls," he said. "There's only one kind of bird and one kind of cow."

— Alex Todorovic

FUERZA UNIDA RENEWS CALL FOR SOLIDARITY AGAINST LEVI'S

SAN ANTONIO, Texas— Responding to Levi Strauss & Co.'s announcement that it plans 6,400 new layoffs, Fuerza Unida, a grassroots organization of women workers in San Antonio renewed calls for solidarity with its seven-year campaign for corporate responsibility at Levi's.

On Nov. 3, the company announced plans to close 11 plants in New Mexico, Arkansas, Tennessee and Texas, laying off 24 percent of its total manufacturing workforce in the U.S. and Canada.

Levi's says it offered a severance package that was subsequently endorsed by the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees. UNITE says it negotiated the agreement. UNITE represents 800 of the workers being laid off.

Referring to the package, a Levi spokesman said, "Because of some of the lessons learned in San Antonio, you see what we have here today." The "lessons learned" have to do with the differences between the severance packages offered to 1,150 non-union San Antonio workers in 1990, and this year's package.

In 1990, Levi Strauss laid off the mostly Mexican-American women sewing Dockers pants at its San Antonio plant. Many of them got less than 24 hours' notice, far less than the eight months' notice other Levi Strauss workers are getting now. The company is also offering current workers

FLAG FOOTBALL

When University of Mississippi sports fans root for their home team, they stand up. They yell. Sometimes they even jeer. And until last November, many showed their school pride through a controversial but long-standing tradition: waving the Confederate flag.

Ole Miss Chancellor Robert Khayat moved to stop the practice — but not by banning the Stars 'n' Bars. After the school's (mostly white) student senate voted to discourage fans from flying the flag — which they said is "perceived as hateful by most Americans" — Khayat chose the round-about route of banning all sticks from athletic events after Nov. 1.



Head football coach Tommy Tuberville called a press conference in October to encourage fans to leave

the flags at home, because the flag hinders recruitment of players, both white and minorities.

— Chris Kromm

Fuerza Unida



TEXAS-BASED FUERZA UNIDA RALLYING AT LEVI PLAZA IN SAN FRANCISCO. LEVI'S ANNOUNCED IN NOVEMBER PLANS TO CLOSE 11 PLANTS — MOSTLY IN THE SOUTH.

three weeks' pay for each year of service, 18 months of continued health benefits and an early retirement option. In contrast, the San Antonio workers got one week's pay for each year of service, three months health care and no early retirement option.

The San Antonio workers are demanding that Levi Strauss offer them a comparable package. "Now that Levi's has admitted its mistakes, it is time to correct those errors," said Fuerza Unida Co-Coordinator Petra Mata. "Levi's should open new negotiations with Fuerza Unida on behalf of the laid-off San Antonio workers. We deserve to be part of Levi's new severance package."

Workers created Fuerza Unida after the 1990 layoffs. The group built a workers' center for the women and their families in San Antonio. It also runs a sewing cooperative and food bank and provides assistance, education, training, and support for workers, whether or not they are currently employed.

The new closings come just

three years after UNITE (then ACTWU) entered a labor-management partnership with Levi Strauss in 1994 to prevent plant closings. UNITE, however, says that while it agreed to the partnership as a job-saving measure, the current plant closings are a different issue.

"We don't think that it has anything to do with the partnership," said UNITE spokeswoman Jo-Ann Mort. When the partnership started, she said, the union "knew that business decision would have to be made."

But the union is saying little beyond that. In a statement issued when the layoffs were announced, UNITE highlighted Levi Strauss' "commitment to a high road of management" and compared the company favorably to its competitors in its treatment of workers.

UNITE also says that the 6,400 new layoffs are due to a "reduction in capacity" for Levi's domestically, rather than an attempt to move jobs to other countries with cheaper labor.

After laying off the Dock-

ers workers in 1990, Levi moved the San Antonio plant to Costa Rica where, according to Fuerza Unida, the average worker earns in one day what the San Antonio workers earned in half an hour.

Fuerza Unida is asking for solidarity with their boycott against Levi's products, and is also asking community groups to reject money from the Levi Strauss Foundation. A national Day of Action is being planned for this May.

Fuerza Unida can be reached at: 710 New Laredo Hwy., San Antonio, TX 78211.

—Leah Samuel

DOIN' IT FOR THEMSELVES

Carolina Students Take the Lead in Affirmative Action Debate

CHAPEL HILL, N.C. — Some people enter the affirmative action debate with a question. Eboni Staton did it with a scream.

Standing on a chair in the Student Union at the Uni-

versity of North Carolina at Chapel Hill last fall, a megaphone in her hand, she led a crowd of nearly 500 students in chants of "No University Without Diversity," and "Education is a right, not just for the rich and white!"

Staton and the other students had gathered to show their support for affirmative action and to respond to a speech by Ward Connerly, a University of California Regent and leader of the successful effort to dismantle affirmative action in that state.

"I got up in front of all those people. There was this feeling that this was something I needed to be involved in," Staton said.

The rallying students were members of the Alliance for Creating Campus Equity and Seeking Social Justice (ACCESS) and the Black Student Movement (BSM). Connerly's speech was sponsored by Common Sense, a conservative student group at UNC-CH.

The rally was Staton's first activity with ACCESS, a group formed at UNC-CH earlier this year to protect affirmative action and improve access to higher education — but it was by no means her last. Staton believes one of the primary goals of students must be to



educate each other about the issues involved.

"Someone who would say affirmative action creates a stigma is just uneducated. I just want to tell them the facts — not just what's in the media or what the Conservative Coalition says. Some people say you have to pull yourself up by your bootstraps, but you can't do that if you don't have boots to hold on to. Affirmative action creates equal opportunity," Staton said.

One way students are educating each other is by sponsoring speeches and forums, open not only to students but to the community. To prepare to fight anti-affirmative action legislation, which will be introduced into the North Carolina General Assembly in 1999, ACCESS is running a post card and petition campaign, urging both state and national representatives to protect the programs.

At the University of Michigan, administrators have been personally named in lawsuits regarding undergraduate against affirmative action policies, making university officials across the country afraid to take a visible stance. Students have stepped up to take their places.

"Students are actually carrying this debate," said Archie Ervin, director of on-campus minority recruitment and special programs at UNC-CH. "A lot of institutional leaders are hesitant to express their views on affirmative action — it's such a controversial issue. Students have less to lose in terms of being attacked by a state or court."

While students may be more protected from lawsuits or job loss because of their affirmative action views, few would agree that they have less to lose from

any part of this debate. UNC system President Molly Broad has called for a review of all schools' admissions policies to make sure they are in line with Supreme Court guidelines regarding affirmative action. This move worries some students, who fear individual chancellors will go beyond their mandate of review and eliminate affirmative action programs altogether.

Many students have been alarmed by what has happened to universities in states that have abandoned their affirmative action programs. The *Washington Post* reports that the law school at UCLA has experienced an 80 percent drop in African American enrollment and currently enrolls its lowest number of African American students since 1970. The enrollment of African American and Hispanic students in Texas has dropped by 20 percent, and the University of Texas law school enrolled no African Americans this year in a class of 475.

At UNC-CH, African Americans now make up 10 percent of the student body. Students fear these numbers — less than half the percentage of African Americans in the state — will fall if North Carolina enacts legislation similar to Proposition 209 in California, or schools are targeted with lawsuits like those filed in Michigan and Texas.

Ervin says UNC-CH has been well within the guidelines for its affirmative action policies for some time before President Broad called for the review. He fears the review could have intangible repercussions.

"I am hoping that people of minority populations don't suffer the double whammy of not being hired because of affirmative action, but then not being hired

even if they are qualified," Ervin said. "For example: if you have a black woman and a white woman who are of relatively equal qualifications, you may have in your mind 'If I hire the black woman, I'll get sued.' You may look around and say 'I'll just hire some dude instead.'"

Students on the right, like Stephen Myers, a member of the campus Young Republicans, think students have an equally powerful role in the anti-affirmative action debate. "When affirmative action is spoken against, the 'against' side is seen as an older part of the population

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AN AD FROM MOZAMBIQUE, WHERE ROBERT E. LEE WHISKEY MARKETS TO BLACK AFRICANS USING CONFEDERATE IMAGERY.

TENDER BEEF:

STATES MOVE TO PROTECT FOOD FROM "DISPARAGEMENT:"

In June 1996, Texas cattle billionaire Paul Engler filed a lawsuit against Oprah Winfrey and a host on her show, Howard Lyman, in what has become known as the "veggie libel law" case. Engler alleged that Winfrey and Lyman, on a segment about the safety of meat that was aired during the Mad Cow epidemic in England, violated a Texas law that forbids someone from "knowingly making false statements" about agricultural products. This law is similar to other "food

disparagement" laws, passed by states in the early 1990s after an investigation by *60 Minutes* on pesticides in apples.

Although Winfrey and Engler won, many states still have "food disparagement" laws on the books.

Critics charge these laws raise serious questions about the ability of business to squash critical discussion of industry practices, and also question whether food has a constitutional right to protection from libel.

STATES WITH "FOOD DISPARAGEMENT" LAWS (IN GRAY):



Source: PR Watch

— one that's cynical and not in touch with current values," Myers said. "We're letting it be known that our generation has problems with these policies, too."

Not all students would agree that Myers position represents the view of the younger generation, however.

"My goal in this whole thing is to see affirmative action continue, because if we lose this thing in the Southeast, we may as well go back to picking cotton," said Evan Sloan, a UNC student and ACCESS member from Greensboro, North Carolina. "I'm growing up as a conscious person through this debate — not just growing as a black person, but as a man. You can't just wait for other people to stand up for you. You have to do it yourself."

For Carolina students, doing it themselves is the only way they know how.

— Alison Fischer

CONTRIBUTORS TO ROUNDUP

Alison Fischer is a student at UNC-Chapel Hill and member of ACCESS.

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Alex Todorovic is editor of the *Columbia, SC, Free Times*.

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Linebackers and Astroturf:

"Grassroots coalition" fighting for a Virginia power line is funded by utility company.

By Ron Nixon

ROANOKE, Va. — From a two-story brick house on Second Street in Roanoke's Old Southwest, Bill Tanger — the founder of Friends of the Roanoke River and chairman of the Roanoke Valley's Sierra Club — is leading what he calls "the largest grassroots coalition in Virginia's history."

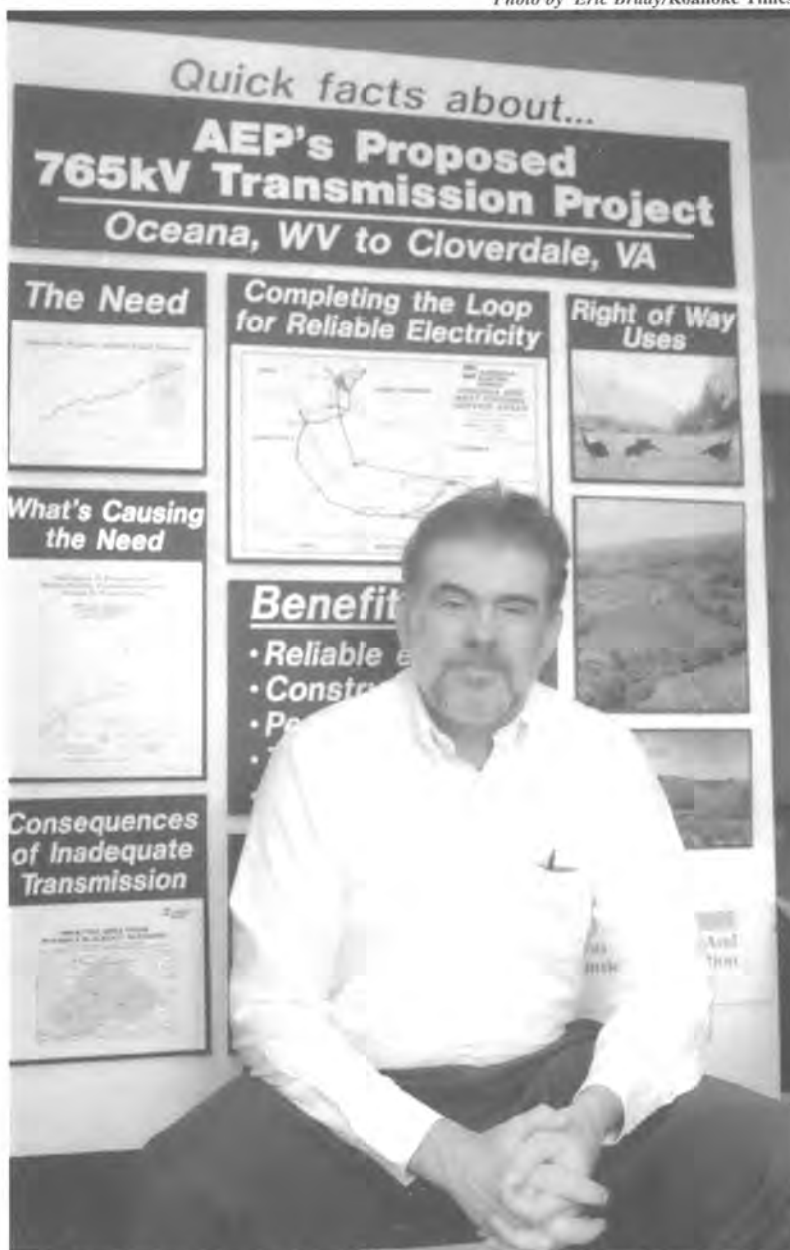
But this coalition has nothing to do with protecting the river or issues that are of interest to the Sierra Club. Instead, it seeks to prevent what he claims is another dire threat: the possibility of widespread electrical blackouts in southwest Virginia.

To that end, Tanger is leading a group that calls itself the Coalition for Energy and Economic Revitalization. CEER's mission is to promote American Electric Power Co.'s proposal to build a 115-mile, 765,000-volt power line from West Virginia and across the New River Valley into Virginia [see "Drawing the Lines," Summer 1995].

Tanger says AEP's power line is vital to southwest Virginia's economic future. In fact, he says, he's so convinced of the need for the power line that he'd give his time freely to support it.

He hasn't had to.

Since 1994, AEP has paid nearly \$700,000 to CEER and to the advertising and public relations firm Tanger runs out of the same Roanoke house. Figures for 1993, the group's first year, were unavailable. Tanger acknowledged in an interview that AEP has funded most of the



BILL TANGER AND HIS COALITION FOR ENERGY AND ECONOMIC REVITALIZATION HAVE BEEN GIVEN \$700,000 BY THE LOCAL UTILITY TO BACK A NEW POWER LINE.

coalition's budget.

Government documents also show that CEER and Tanger's firm, Image Advertising, are one and the same. Tanger serves as Virginia coordinator for CEER. The West Virginia coordinator, Tom Bloss, is a former AEP employee.

That's proof, power-line opponents

say, that CEER is merely a front group for AEP, established to create the appearance of grassroots support. "They are paid lobbyists for AEP," said U.S. Rep. Rick Boucher, D-Abington.

Tanger says otherwise. Despite the funding from AEP, he said, CEER is an independent collection of 590 business,



AS ONE POWER LINE OPPONENT SAYS, "WE ARE REALLY CONCERNED CITIZENS; THEY ARE PROXIES OF AMERICAN ELECTRIC POWER."

labor, civic and government groups in West Virginia and Virginia. "They [power-line opponents] can think whatever," Tanger said. "These people are not on AEP's payroll."

Critics say this is a textbook case of "Astroturf lobbying," one of the fastest-growing segments of the public relations industry. Borrowing a page from community groups, PR firms seek to sway public opinion by organizing coalitions of small business and sympathetic nonprofits or create letter-writing campaigns to create the image of popular support. In most cases, the support is sought for the client without public knowledge.

Companies that specialize in Astroturf lobbying say the purpose "is to make a strategically planned program look like a spontaneous explosion of community support," according to promotional material from Davies Communications, a California company that specializes in the field.

"It's standard practice for a corporation like AEP to set up a front group like the coalition for the appearance of broad support," said John Stauber of *PR Watch*. "To the public that hears the name CEER, there's no immediate identifiable asso-

ciation with AEP."

Since CEER's founding, its members have routinely written letters to the editor, met with legislators and supported the power line at public hearings. They also have taken out full-page newspaper ads touting the economic benefits of the power line, and they publish a newsletter called the "Linebacker."

In some ways, that's not much different from what power-line opponents have done. But there is one major difference, said Jeff Janosko of the Roanoke County Preservation League. "The difference is we are really concerned citizens, and they are proxies of AEP," Janosko said. "AEP certainly has the right to promote its agenda, but let's put all the books on the table."

Opponents say CEER often misrepresents itself. For example:

In the material given out by the coalition and in newspaper ads, there is no mention of the fact that AEP is funding the group or that it is a business name for Image Advertising.

Although CEER states in a brochure that its mission is to foster economic development in West Virginia and Virginia, Tanger said that the power line is the only issue CEER is involved in.

At least one former member of CEER withdrew after learning of its ties to AEP. The Greenbrier Airport Authority in West Virginia withdrew from the coalition in 1993 because of public pressure.

For Janosko, the issue is credibility. "If the power line stands on its own merit like AEP says it does, why would they have to engage in this type of activity with CEER?"

Note: The state office of the Sierra Club in Virginia recently issued a statement stating its "continued opposition to the Wyoming-Cloverdale power line, despite recent public statements in its favor by William Tanger ... Mr. Tanger, a paid advertising consultant for American Electric Power Co. (AEP), may have been portrayed in the media in a way that may have led some to believe he speaks for the Sierra Club on this issue. The Club now emphatically reiterates its position on the project, and encourages all concerned citizens to agitate for its abandonment." **S**

Ron Nixon is a reporter for The Roanoke Times and a frequent contributor to Southern Exposure.



Photo courtesy of KIND radio

DISTRESS SIGNAL



By Ron Holmes

Will a government crackdown crush the low-watt radio revolution?

In a pre-dawn raid last fall in the middle-class Tampa suburb of Temple Terrace, Florida, dozens of federal and multi-jurisdictional agents — some armed with laser-sighted machine guns — converged on a quiet home, roused its occupants from sleep and held them at gunpoint while electronic equipment worth thousands of dollars was loaded

into a waiting van. It was a carefully staged SWAT team operation. Neighbors had been quietly warned to stay indoors and the media had been tipped off. As a government helicopter whirred overhead, television cameras recorded a domestic scene which, in past years, had been known for the Christmas lights that Doug Brewer strung on his ham radio antenna.



Photo courtesy of KIND radio



A MICRO REVOLUTION

Pirate Radio, Free Radio, Micro-broadcasting — the term depends upon who is speaking. The FCC still clings to the outdated “pirate” label, while the National Association of Broadcasters has coined “broadcast bandits” — suggesting that these shoe string broadcasters are stealing directly from the pockets of the rich and powerful NAB members.

“We’re not pirates,” insists Willie One Blood, one of approximately 75 DJs on the unlicensed, 24-hour-a-day, seven-days-a-week station Kind Radio in San Marcos, Texas. “It’s a matter of free speech.”

The sentiment is expressed frequently by those seeking change in FCC regulations, and is one that strikes at the heart of important questions: Is the FCC’s mandate to regulate “in the public interest” best served by media conglomerates, or can small community-based volunteers better serve a community? Do low-powered stations have a free-speech right to the airwaves? Should they at least be afforded a small slice of the spectrum pie?

The station in San Marcos illustrates the potential of low-powered, community broadcasting. A couple of years ago the chamber of commerce there began exploring ways of getting a radio station for their community. Located half way between Austin and San Antonio, the town of approximately 50,000 people had for years been “served” by stations from the nearby cities. But in early 1997 the chamber decided that the idea was simply too expensive.

Meanwhile, the publishers of a local alternative newspaper, which had gained notoriety for winning a Supreme Court victory against the local university, were searching for yet another alternative. They settled on radio. In March 1997, members of the *Hays County Guardian* started Kind Radio and were soon transmitting to the community — 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Today the nonprofit, non-commercial station offers more programs than any

Stolen equipment? A drug bust? Neither. The Florida couple’s crime was the operation of a low-powered unlicensed community radio station, and their failure to pay a \$1,000 fine previously levied by the Federal Communications Commission.

It all started innocently enough, says Brewer. One Christmas he began broadcasting Christmas music to drivers visiting his lights. But soon Brewer’s biker-rock “Party Pirate” station was broadcasting full time, and he was sporting a shirt that read, “License? We don’t need no stinking license.”

Only weeks before the raid, in a story about Brewer’s station in the *Wall Street Journal*, an FCC agent had vowed, “Sooner or later, I’ll nail him.”

Yet Brewer and his wife, Karen, were only one of three such operations conducted by federal agents against unlicensed broadcasters in the Tampa area —

that same night. Further, the three represented only a portion of the nine or 10 unlicensed stations operating in the Tampa area. Across the state in the Miami area, insiders estimate there are as many as 40 such stations.

But low-watt radio is not just a Florida phenomenon. In cities across the South and across the country — from Richmond to Memphis, Houston, San Francisco, Minneapolis, Boston, Philadelphia and Kansas City — hundreds of Americans have taken to the airwaves without FCC sanction.

Quite simply, the nation is experiencing a near-revolution of unlicensed broadcasting. Driving this upheaval is the belief that public radio has failed, frustration with the emergence of mega-media monopolies, the availability of inexpensive micro broadcasting equipment — and, perhaps, the idea that radio, like speech, should be free.



Photos courtesy of KIND radio

microbroadcast station in the country, all with volunteers, donated equipment and 30 watts of power. Although programming is open to everyone in the community, there are a few rules: no obscenity, no pornography, no advertising and no selling.

"The biggest thing is to include all the community," says Zeal Stefanoff, one of the organizers. "I think people here are beginning to really understand that free speech is more than just some words in the Constitution. We've had a county judge on the air. We covered the police elections, the marijuana initiative. We have a news show every day from 10 a.m. until noon."

Of course, not everyone in the community is happy with the brand of programming offered by Kind Radio's assorted crew of environmentalists, marijuana supporters and social activists. Stefanoff says there has been some harassment from local governmental agencies. But even that may be changing. In October 1997, a jury found Joe Ptak, director of the station, not guilty of ordinance violations filed against him by the City of San Marcos.

"It's like we've got the only baseball in town," says Stefanoff, "so even if everyone doesn't like us they still send us their public service announcements."

Nor is non-commercial, community radio a radical idea. In many countries, such as Japan, Italy and Canada, low-powered, non-commercial, even unlicensed, broadcasting is quite legal. Not only does Canadian law give priority to nonprofit community stations — it requires only a three-page application. In Japan Sony sells a complete, low-powered community broadcasting set.

Indeed, until the late '70s, the FCC licensed Class D, 10-watt FM stations for non-commercial, educational purposes. But in 1978 the agency discontinued the practice, setting the lower transmitting power limit at 100 watts. The move extended the range of these stations, but lowered the number of potential locations on the spectrum. It was based on the philosophy that fewer, more powerful stations are preferable to numerous

low-powered ones.

Somewhat surprisingly, the action had the support of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, which saw it as a chance to increase not only its transmitting power but the professionalism of National Public Radio. But today, many critics claim that public radio, absorbed in seeking ever-larger funding, has lost its vitality and sold itself to the largest corporate bidders. They argue that public radio does not adequately represent the community.

Within an atmosphere of dwindling community programming, the Telecommunications Act of 1996 prompted a glut of media mergers and acquisitions. The heavily-lobbed deregulation bill loosened the FCC multiple-ownership rules and allowed for the wholesale acquisition of local stations.

On Feb. 7, 1997, the National Association of Broadcasters filed comments with the FCC asking the commission to "make substantial changes to its ownership rules in light of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 and the breathtaking transformation of the local media marketplace."

One month later, the FCC did so, eliminating the caps on the number of broadcast stations that might be owned or controlled by a single entity and revising local ownership rules to allow a company to own more stations within a market.

Not surprisingly, the industry had an-



anticipated the move. In 1995 radio mergers and acquisitions amounted to approximately \$70 million. By the end of 1996, the figure had jumped to more than \$13 billion. Even those within the industry admit that the airwaves are now dominated by a handful of mega-corporations.

LOW-WATT VS. BIG GUNS

Most of those involved in the free radio movement date its beginnings to the advent of WTRA Radio in Springfield, Illi-



nois. In 1988, Mbanna Kantako, a blind former disk jockey, began broadcasting with a one-watt transmitter from his apartment in the predominantly black Hay Homes public housing project. As a member of the Tenants Rights Association, Kantako had been seeking a means of reaching those in the project. Because of his blindness and his background, radio was the perfect forum.

In 1989 the FCC fined Kantako \$750 for broadcasting without a license. Kantako appealed the fine citing First and 14th Amendment rights. He also asked the court to appoint an attorney to represent him. But the federal court, ruling that the case was a civil matter, refused Kantako an attorney and upheld the fine. Kantako refused to pay the fine and continued broadcasting, expanding his schedule to 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Although Kantako eventually decided not to challenge the FCC in court, the Committee for Democratic Communications of the National Lawyers Guild had prepared a set of briefs and arguments for his case.

"The committee was the result of discussions of the international participants in the McBride Roundtable several years ago," says NLG attorney Louis Hiken. "The complaint was that all the world news comes from London, Tokyo, New York and so forth. To get local news is virtually impossible because of the mo-

nopoly in the media."

"Micro radio is a natural for that. In fact, micro radio is one of the few means available to underdeveloped countries around the world that don't have access to the millions of dollars necessary to establish large reporting systems. For \$1,000 someone can set up a station in their own community."

With their unused brief in hand, the NLG was ready for a new microradio client, and they soon found one, in the home of the original Free Speech Movement, Berkeley, California.

In 1993, radio engineer Stephen Dunifer had begun broadcasting on the FM band, packing his equipment into a backpack and hiking into the Berkeley hills to avoid the FCC. But in November of that year the FCC issued fines against Dunifer and in 1994 asked the court for an injunction against his broadcasts. Dunifer's response has become a catch phrase of the free radio movement.

"Kiss my Bill of Rights," Dunifer told the FCC.

Dunifer also began manufacturing and selling low-power transmitter kits and accessories and providing technical expertise, not only in the U.S., but worldwide.

In classic Catch-22 arguments, the FCC told the court that Dunifer should have applied for a license and asked for a

Photo courtesy of pirate radio station, 102.1FM in Tampa



"NOTORIOUS RADIOPIRATES" L TO R: DOUG BREWER, KNOWN TO LISTENERS AS CRAVEN MOOREHEAD FROM 102.1; STEPHEN DUNIFER; AND LONNIE 'LUTZMAN' KOBRES.

waiver of the 100-watt minimum rule, although the agency has yet to grant such a waiver to a microbroadcaster. They also argued that while the court had the jurisdiction to issue an injunction, it did not have the jurisdiction to hear the constitutional questions raised.

But in 1995, Federal Judge Claudia Wilkens stunned the broadcasting world by denying the FCC's motion for an injunction, allowing Dunifer to continue his broadcasts. It was the first such denial in the agency's long history.

Soon, microbroadcasters, encouraged by the court's decision, were sprouting like Mao's 100 flowers. "Communities have a lot to gain," says Dunifer. "Microbroadcasting can give them a voice they would not otherwise have, a voice that will reflect their community interests, not that of a remote corporation."

From his San Francisco office, Hiken argues that the FCC has consistently tried to avoid any litigation that will address the constitutional issues.

"The FCC has spent the last three or four years trying to avoid a hearing on the merits of the case, on the constitutionality of prohibiting low-power broadcasting, on whether the FCC frequency allocations are based on the public interest, on whether they're observing the least-wattage rule and employing new technologies. At some time they're going to have to explain why giving to corporate interests is in the public interest," he says.

It is also possible that the FCC has begun to tailor its enforcements against microbroadcasters in order to argue their cases to friendlier courts, which they have found in Florida and Minnesota.

On Aug. 24, 1997, the FCC won a summary judgment against Lonnie Kobres, a Tampa microbroadcaster whose equipment they had seized in March 1996. While Kobres had challenged the FCC's authority to regulate his broadcast operation and the seizure of his equipment, District Judge Steven D. Merryday denied his claim to the equipment and granted the government's motion for summary judgment. In a similar case in Minneapolis, the FCC news release



stated, "...the Court agreed with the Government's argument that the District Court does not have subject matter jurisdiction to consider the constitutionality of the FCC rules."

The industry was delighted with the ruling. NAB President and CEO Edward O. Fritts told the press, "We are delighted that federal authorities have stepped up enforcement against pirate radio stations. The NAB Radio Board in June asked for the FCC to focus more attention on the growing number of unlicensed stations. We commend the commission for sending a strong message to broadcast bandits that their illegal activities will not be tolerated."

But the NAB's delight was to be short-lived. On Nov. 12, 1997, Federal Judge Claudia Wilken upheld the court's jurisdiction on the constitutional question of FCC regulations prohibiting microbroadcasters. She denied, without prejudice, the FCC's motion for summary judgment in Dunifer's case and asked for further briefing on the constitutional question.

In her ruling, Judge Wilken dismissed the recent Minnesota decision, saying, "...a single district court case from another circuit is slim authority on which to base this decision."

Again the NAB responded saying, "We are extremely disappointed with yet another delay in a case that was argued 19 months ago. Pirate radio stations are illegal and should be put out of business."

A few days after Wilken's decision, on Nov. 19, the FCC staged the Tampa raids.

SPEECH FOR CHEAP

David vs. Goliath politics aren't all that has fueled the microbroadcasting movement. Low-watt is popular because it's cheap. The availability of reliable, low-cost transmitters means that an individual with \$500 in his or her pocket and some common household electronics can start broadcasting, reaching an audience within a radius of perhaps five miles, perfectly adequate for most communities or small towns.

As Hiken stated in his brief to the



Photo courtesy of pirate radio station, 102.1FM in Tampa

THE 102.1FM REMOTE VAN IN TAMPA. PROBABLY THE ONLY 'PIRATE' REMOTE TRUCK IN THE U.S.

court, "The historical significance of micro radio lies precisely in the fact that average citizens can now have access to the airwaves to communicate with their neighbors."

Andrew Yoder, who has written a couple of books about pirate radio and has been the recipient of a nocturnal visit by FCC agents, says there are five or six major suppliers of low-power FM transmitters, including Free Radio Berkeley and Brewer's company in Florida. While American suppliers cannot sell a completed FM transmitter to an unlicensed station, it is legal to sell "kits," which may involve merely soldering a few wires together.

Of course the Internet is a goldmine of information about microbroadcasting, including hardware suppliers, information on how to start a station, pirate/free radio Web sites, bulletin boards and chat groups. There is even a wealth of technical information, such as electronic schematics and antenna designs.

Anticipating more micro radio cases

across the country, the NLG has posted copies of their motions, pleadings and research on the Internet — all readily available to the nation's more crusading attorneys. "We didn't want other attorneys to have to re-invent the wheel," says Hiken.

ROOM ON THE DIAL

Like free speech, the free radio movement is one of those traditional issues capable of igniting the passions of a cross-section of the American public, attracting proponents across the political dial.

For two years Kobres, whose home near Tampa was also raided in the early-morning hours of Nov. 16, had been transmitting religious and right-wing political programs over the FM band.

"All I ever did was rebroadcast. All that information was on the satellite or the Internet. I just made it possible for people to get it on their FM radio," Kobres says. "That's the whole reason why they hit me. I'm not going to call it anti-government. We're pro-government, pro-truth, pro-justice, but they're



How to start your own low-watt station

Here's a list of what's needed for a small station and the approximate costs.

- Transmitter \$500
- Mixing board \$100
- CD Player \$200
- Turntable \$200
- Cassette player \$200
- Two microphones @ \$20 each
- Antenna \$200

Almost everyone within the Free Radio movement also stresses the importance of filters and limiters to insure reliable transmissions.

For "kits" containing this equipment and instructions on how to put it together, contact Free Radio Berkeley (contact information at end of this story).



102.1 FM'S TRANSMITTER RACKS *Photo courtesy of 102.1FM in Tampa*

pervverting our society."

"My wife and I awoke in absolute horror," Kobres adds. "A helicopter was hovering over our house. They came to the door with a battering ram. I didn't serve in the military to be subjected to this sort of thing."

Kobres says that federal agents seized \$25,000 worth of equipment and charged him with 14 criminal counts, each carrying a maximum penalty of 28 years in jail and a \$200,000 fine. Serious penalties, but for first-time, low-profile offenders, the FCC currently seems to be following a policy of warnings, fines and equipment confiscation in its attempts to control the situation.

As to how many unlicensed broadcasters are operating in the U. S., it's anyone's guess. David Fiske, media relations spokesman for the FCC, says the agency doesn't really have any idea; neither can the agency provide statistics on the number of FCC actions against microbroadcasters. "We don't keep numbers," says Fiske. "We operate on a case-by-case basis. I suppose someone could count them up."

Strange for an agency that has dedicated an entire section of its Web site to "Low Power Broadcast Radio Stations," complete with dire warnings of penalties and an explanation of the two relevant Supreme Court decisions concerning the constitutional question. The FCC does admit, however, that it receives 13,000 requests per year regarding starting a low-power radio station.

Yoder estimates that there are at least 100 unlicensed stations that broadcast on a regular basis. "It's pretty much everywhere in the country," he says. "But the stations in the rural areas don't get much press."

Other than the fact that they're unlicensed, the FCC raises other objections in its battle against microbroadcasting. For instance, it often states that microbroadcasters interfere with legal stations. But in fact, evidence of actual cases of interference by microbroadcasters is hard to find. A 1994 Freedom of Information request revealed



Micro-Broadcasting information and contacts

that the FCC possessed no written complaints over the alleged interference problems caused by Free Radio Berkeley. Faced with a scarcity of real complaints, the FCC encouraged members of the NAB to help identify unlicensed operators in their area.

The agency also claims that it is simply not practical to license low-power transmitters. But Yoder finds this hypocritical. "They're licensing translator stations. Most of them are under 100 watts. The FCC is simply trying to fill all the space that's out there."

Low-watt advocates point out that, given the FCC's mandate to regulate in the public interest and the fact that the broadcast spectrum is limited, the courts should reserve some right for a community to truly control its own airwaves.

In his brief to the court, Hiken defined what is at stake: "If there is irreparable harm to be found in this case, it is the ongoing policy of the FCC to license only the rich, and a handful of educational institutions, that creates such harm. Technology currently exists to allow thousands of Americans to have access to the airwaves in ways that could assure their democratic use and a meaningful voice in the democratic process.

"Instead, the FCC has created a system whereby the public listens, and the elite broadcast."

SE

Ron Holmes writes for Urban Tulsa magazine and other publications.

RADIO FREE BERKELEY

Web address: <http://www.freeradio.org>

Information packets and kits are available through the following:

Voice mail (510) 464-3041

E-mail: frbspd@crl.com

1442 A Walnut St #406

Berkeley, CA 94709

KIND RADIO — SAN MARCOS, TEXAS

On-the-air phone number (512) 754-0274

Web address: <http://www.mediadesign.net>

DOUG BREWER

Low power transmitters and equipment

Web address: <http://www.ldbrewer.com>

FREE RADIO GROUPS ON THE INTERNET

Radio 4 All

Web address: <http://www.radio4all.org>

The Free Radio Network

Web address: <http://www.frn.net>

OFFICE OF LOUIS HIKEN

Committee for Democratic Communications

National Lawyers Guild

Web address: <http://www.368hayes.com>

THE FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

Web address: <http://www.fcc.gov>

HOBBY BROADCASTING

A quarterly put out by Andrew Yoder

\$12/Year

PO Box 642

Mont Alto, PA 17237



The School of ASSASSINS

By Mike Hudson

Pressure mounts to close America's most infamous military training base

Nov. 25, 1944

Richard Streb, a 19-year-old radar operator, was heading below to catch some sleep when he and a buddy heard the USS Essex's big guns start to blast away in the sun-baked Pacific air. The aircraft carrier was under attack again.

They heard a bigger explosion. A wave of heat washed over them. Men shouted and ran past them. An officer tossed Streb and his buddy some gloves and told them to go clean up the flight deck. When they got there, they found the body parts of dead sailors. The intense heat had twisted one man's right arm so that it pointed straight up. A New York Yankees cap hung from his outstretched fingers. A Japanese kamikaze pilot had crashed his plane into the Essex. Seventeen men, including the pilot, had died.

It was on that day that Richard Streb became an activist for peace.

Nov. 16, 1997

Navy veteran Richard Streb shouldered a black wooden coffin at the front of thousands of people marching onto Fort Benning. He and others had driven to Georgia to join in a demonstration marking the eighth anniversary of the assassination of six Jesuit priests, their cook and her daughter in El Salvador. Nineteen of the 27 military officers implicated in the killings were graduates of the U.S. Army's School the Americas — a training facility at Fort Benning suspected of teaching Latin American soldiers the techniques of assassination and torture.

As many as 2,000 people — including veterans, nuns, clergy and students — joined the demonstration.

They gathered outside Fort Benning for prayers and speeches. Then 601 of them marched onto the post, many carrying white crosses bearing the names of civilians believed to have been killed by graduates of the school.

After half a mile or so, they followed a bend in the road and came face to face with local and federal police. A voice on a bullhorn announced they were under arrest for trespassing. Officers searched and fingerprinted the marchers and gave written warnings to most. But they swore out criminal charges against 28 who had been warned during previous protests. One of them was Streb.

Three days later, Streb stood before a federal magistrate in Georgia and told of the battle stars he had earned in World War II and how his Navy experiences had led him

Photo courtesy of The Roanoke Times



NAVY VETERAN RICHARD STREB HAS MADE PEACE — AND CLOSING THE U.S. ARMY'S SCHOOL OF THE AMERICAS — HIS PASSION.

to become a peace activist.

Then U.S. Magistrate William Slaughter announced his decision: He sentenced Streb and two other marchers to six months in prison and fines of \$3,000 apiece.

The U.S. Army's School of the Americas has trained almost 60,000 Latin American soldiers and officers since it was created after World War II. U.S. officials say its purpose is to fight communism, encourage democracy and instill professionalism in the Latin American military.

Critics call it the "School of Assassins," saying the school trains its students in political murder, torture and other criminal techniques used to prop up U.S.-friendly dictators.

Critics call it the "School of Assassins," saying the school trains its students in political murder, torture and other criminal techniques used to prop up U.S.-friendly dictators.

Graduates of the school include what *Newsweek* calls the region's "most despicable military strongmen," including former Panamanian dictator Manuel Noriega, who is now serving a 40-year sentence for drug trafficking. Ten of the 12 Salvadoran military officers implicated in the 1981 El Mozote massacre — which killed 700-plus civilians — were

School of the Americas graduates.

A 1992 Pentagon report found that teaching materials used at the school from 1982 to 1991 advocated murder, kidnapping and other crimes. The report said the manuals encouraged "motivation by fear, payment of bounties for enemy dead, false imprisonment, executions and the use of truth serum." Rep. Joseph Kennedy, D-Mass., has introduced a bill that would close the school and now has more than 100 co-signers in Congress.

School defenders contend that its problems have been corrected and that reports of abuse have been exaggerated. "On a number of occasions, I was able to prevent a coup because I knew the people," said Edwin Corr, a U.S. ambassador to several Latin American nations

Photo courtesy of SOA Watch



MORE THAN 2,000 ACTIVISTS CONVERGED ON THE U.S. ARMY'S SCHOOL OF THE AMERICAS LAST NOVEMBER, DEMANDING THE SCHOOL BE SHUT DOWN. A BILL TO CLOSE THE SCHOOL HAS 100 CO-SIGNERS IN CONGRESS.

during the Reagan administration. "They had been to the School of the Americas, and I was able to use that as common ground."

"You always hear about the horrible human rights violations by a few bad apples," Corr added, "but you never hear about all the crimes that were prevented."

A protest group, School of the Americas Watch, has been organizing opposition to the school since 1990. The group includes retired Maj. Joseph Blair, a Bronze Star winner and former instructor at the school. He believes the "few bad apples" defense doesn't wash, and that the School of the Americas should be shut down.

"It's time for SOA to drown in its own blood," Blair said.



REV. ROY BOURGEOIS DIRECTS THE SCHOOL OF THE AMERICA'S WATCH. AFTER THE NOVEMBER RALLY, BOURGEOIS PROMISED "WE WILL KEEP COMING BACK UNTIL THE SCHOOL OF ASSASSINS IS SHUT DOWN FOR GOOD."

Massacre in Mexico: The SOA Connection

The massacre of 45 unarmed civilians in Chiapas, Mexico, by paramilitary death squads on Dec. 22, 1997, brought the brutal fury of the region's low intensity warfare to the world's attention. Though local officials were arrested, and the governor of Chiapas and the federal interior minister were forced to resign, others have asked if the roots of this repression lie in the United States.

Mexican officers have become the largest national grouping trained at the School of the Americas since 1994, when Zapatista rebels rose up against the government. SOA admits that 153 Mexican soldiers and officers graduated in 1996. That number rose to 315

in 1997 — one-third of the graduating class, according to SOA Watch.

SOA training manuals have included torture and assassination as counterinsurgency techniques. A 1959 Mexican SOA grad, General Juan Lopez Ortiz, was sent into Chiapas after the January '94 uprising. In the town of Ocosingo, troops under his command summarily executed five suspected Zapatistas. The troops tied the prisoners' hands behind their backs before shooting them in the back of the head.

So far, SOA Watch has identified 13 Mexican SOA grads involved in southern Mexico's low-intensity warfare. A number of them are suspected drug traffickers. The Mexican magazine

Milenio recently identified five more Mexican SOA grads involved in this southern counterinsurgency campaign. *Milenio* named '95 SOA grad Raul Gainez Segura as holding a position in Military Intelligence in Chiapas.

Yet more evidence of a connection comes from Guatemala. In early January of this year, the Mexican newspaper *Cronica de Hoy* identified two Guatemala Army SOA grads as suspected illegal arms traffickers in an operation originating in Guatemala City. The article described assault weapons, such as AK-47s used in the Acteal massacre, being loaded onto Mexican trucks.

— By Michael Steinberg, an investigative reporter based in Durham, NC.

Some Famous SOA Graduates

For \$20 million each year, the School of the Americas trains 900-2,000 soldiers from Latin America and the Caribbean. Since 1946, the U.S. Army's SOA has trained almost 60,000 Latin American leaders in "counterinsurgency." Some of the school's most notorious alumni:



ARGENTINA

Gen. Leopoldia Galtieri: President, 1981-82.

Oversaw the last two years of junta rule when an estimated 30,000 suspected dissidents were tortured, disappeared and/or murdered.



BOLIVIA

Gen. Hugo Banzer

Suarez: Dictator 1971-78. Took power through

a bloody coup and developed the Banzer Plan to silence outspoken members of the Church; the plan became a blueprint for repression throughout Latin America. Inducted into the U.S. Army School of the Americas Hall of Fame (SOA-HOF), 1988.



COLOMBIA

Gen. Luis Eduardo Roca and Gen. José Nelson Mejía: Colombian Army.

In 1991, Generals Roca and Mejía — in thanking the U.S. Congress for \$40.3 million in anti-narcotics aid — pledged \$38.5 million to a counterinsurgency campaign in northeast Colombia, where narcotics are neither grown nor processed. Both SOA-HOF, 1991.

Lt. Col. Victor Bernal Castaño: Was allowed to attend the SOA in 1992 to escape a criminal investigation of his role in the massacre of a peasant family.



EL SALVADOR

The U.N. Truth Commission Report on El Salvador, released in 1993,

cited more than 60 Salvadoran officers for atrocities during the country's civil war. More than two-thirds of those named were SOA alumni, including two of the three cited in the murder of Archbishop Romero, and 19 of 26 cited in a massacre of Jesuit priests.

Col. Jose Mario Godinez Castillo: Cited by Salvadoran Non-Governmental Human Rights Commission (NGHRC) for involvement in 1,051 summary executions, 129 tortures, 8 rapes — 1,288 total victims.

Col. Dionisio Ismael Machuca: Former director, National Police; former member of SOA cadre (Panama). Cited by NGHRC for involvement in 318 tortures, and 610 illegal detentions.



GUATEMALA

Gen. Manuel Antonio

Callejas y Callejas: Under President Remeo Lucas

Garcia, was senior intelligence officer in charge of choosing targets for assassination. SOA-HOF, 1988.

Gen. Hector Gramajo: Retired defense minister. Held key military and government positions; architect of government/military strategies that legalized military atrocities throughout the '80s.



HAITI

Major Joseph-Michel

Francois: Police chief,

Haiti. Played a key role in the Haitian coup that ousted President Aristide. SOA trained Haitian soldiers prior to 1986, during the Duvalier dictatorship.



HONDURAS

Gen. Policarpo Paz

Garcia: Dictator, 1980-

82. Ruled during 100-150 disappearances. SOA-HOF, 1988.



PANAMA

Gen. Manuel Antonio

Noriega: Ex-president and

CIA asset until ousted by United States. Now serving 40 years in U.S. prison for drug trafficking.

Information from *Cover Action Quarterly*, *Newsweek*, *Washington Post* and School of the Americas Watch.

In court last November, Streb quoted Thomas Jefferson and talked about how his wartime service had changed his life. He hoped it might sway the magistrate. It didn't. The federal courts slapped Streb and 24 others with the maximum prison sentence — six months.

The activists see this as a perversion of justice. "Justice is being turned upside down," said the Rev. Kennon, one of the 31 arrested. "We will go to prison for walking in a funeral procession, while SOA killers and those who train them go free."

Streb hates the thought of a cell door clanging behind him, but what concerns him most is losing time out of his life. He's got things to do. "At my age," Streb says, "I don't want to waste six months."

But he doesn't regret his decision. When he got out of the Navy, he knew he wanted to work for peace. In the past few years, his time has been consumed by traveling around the United States to interview his old shipmates from the Essex. He hopes his book will provide a window to the suffering of war.

"If you want to have peace," Streb says, "you have to be able to compromise and adjust. And there has to be greater equality. You can't keep peace if people are hungry and starving."

For more information on the School of the Americas, go online to the Columbus (Ga.) Ledger-Enquirer at <http://www.l-e-o.com/news/soaindex.htm>, or contact SOA Watch at PO Box 3330, Columbus, GA 31903.

SE

Mike Hudson is co-author of *Merchants of Misery: How Corporate America Profits from Poverty* (Common Courage Press), and is a frequent contributor to *Southern Exposure*.

WISE, Va. — U.S. 23, just past Jenkins, Kentucky, is under ominous construction, and the road cut looms so high that the colossal limestone highwall looks like a mammoth archaeological dig.

The gray rock matches the gray skies and the gray misty mountains, the way Appalachia always looks in the winter, like a gauzy web that cocoons natives but induces claustrophobia to visitors.

I was on my way to Clinch Valley College, a four-year school that has accidentally become an international phenomenon as the nerve center of Melungeons — a group of people in remote out-reaches of Appalachia who have been forgotten for years but who are now flourishing on the newly-plowed ground of the Internet.

Digging for

Are Mountain Melungeons a Geneological Discovery or a Virtual Community?

By Judy Jones



ROOTS



The common explanation is that Melungeons are a mix of whites, Africans and Native Americans who have lived in Appalachia. That definition was challenged about 10 years ago by Brent Kennedy, a chancellor at the college who believes that Melungeons have a more important place in history — the first peaceful mixing of Europeans, Africans, Native Americans and other races in America and possible descendants of Turkish seafarers.

Since then, Melungeons have exploded on the scene to claim their identity. Kennedy's path-breaking book, *The Melungeons: Resurrection of a Proud People*, has sold more than 12,000 copies. A dozen Web pages have popped up on the Internet, a computerized e-mail list serves hundreds and more than 600 people gathered last summer in Kentucky for a Melungeon "First Union" — when initial planners thought they would be lucky if 50 showed up.

But who the Melungeons are and how they came to be in Appalachia is an unraveling story.

I ran into Brent Kennedy almost immediately after pulling onto the Clinch Valley campus. I stuck out my hand, and he shook it. But that was just an excuse to pull me forward so he could feel for an "Anatolian bump" on my head — a hallmark of Melungeon ancestry.

In the past, Melungeons' dark features gave them a distinctive appearance, with olive skin, dark hair and piercing blue eyes amid a sea of Scottish-Irish immigrants. Other physical features, such as an "Anatolian bump" on their heads, Asian eye folds and shovel-shaped teeth, were distinctive markers for Melungeons.

He rummaged through my hair with medical efficiency. He didn't find a bump but was undeterred. I definitely had Asian eye folds.

"I would check you for shovel-shaped teeth if I weren't getting over the flu," Kennedy said, and I was thus anointed as a Possible Melungeon.

All this grabbing and rubbing is so fun-filled and good-natured that it's hard to tell at first whether these people are serious. They are.

Melungeons have been known in the region for centuries. But the new Melungeon researchers are dead-set on defining what it means to be Appalachian, and they aren't relying on traditional explanations that Appalachians derive from Scottish and Irish heritage.

Kennedy started questioning the Scottish-Irish explanation when he became ill with something his doctors could not immediately diagnose.

"Finally, I was diagnosed with sarcoidosis. Sarcoidosis is found among the Portuguese, Africans and Appalachian whites," Kennedy said. "Doctors here thought of sarcoidosis as an African disease, but in fact those black African Americans got the gene for the condition through Mediterranean ancestors."

Kennedy turned his curiosity to research and began to find evidence that challenged tradition. For one thing, he found that many dark-skinned Appalachians described themselves as being "Portygee."

Because many Appalachians can be traced back to immigrants whose ships listed them as Irish, Scottish and English in the early 1700s, Kennedy faces an uphill battle in explaining how Mediterraneans ended up in the mix.

The missing link

How could Spanish or Portuguese people have made it into the Appalachian mountains?

Archaeologist Chester De Pratter has some clues. One starts with a 1566 Spanish settlement on Paris Island, south of Beaufort, South Carolina. Under the leadership of Juan Pardo, explorers tried to open up an overland road to Mexico to transport silver. Pardo's men made it as far as what is now Asheville, North Carolina, and established a small outpost. The following year another group returned, and went near Knoxville, Tennessee.

What became of this group is unknown. They might have been overrun by Indians, or they might have survived and lived with the Indians.



Brent Kennedy, a chancellor at Clinch Valley College, believes that Melungeons have a more important place in history — the first peaceful mixing of Europeans, Africans, Native Americans and other races in America and possible descendants of Turkish seafarers.

DePratter can't make a direct link to the Melungeons. But the presence of 16th Century Spanish coins in the mountains is tempting evidence that some of the Spaniards lived in the region and survived.

There's also Sir Frances Drake, who in 1586 attacked an area near Santa Domingo and captured slaves held by the Spanish, including Turks and Moors as well as American Indians. These slaves were being taken to Virginia when a storm came and sunk several of the vessels. Some could have survived and gradually moved inland.

Other theories involve possible members of a party with Spanish explorer Hernando de Soto, who were separated during an exploration of the Mississippi and were traveling east when they finally settled in the Appalachians.

While no one has made a direct link to any of these possible lost Portuguese, it is certain that the British, on first viewing

Appalachians, did not visualize them as a preserved version of their ancient Anglo-Saxon forbearers. When world-renowned British historian Arnold Toynbee visited Appalachia, he detailed the following observation of its people:

"[T]he Appalachian 'Mountain People' at this day are no better than barbarians. They are the American counterparts of the latter-day White barbarians of the Old World: . . . the Kurds and the Pathans and the Hairy Ainu . . . [But t]hrough one of several alternative processes — extermination or subjection or assimilation — these last lingering survivals will assuredly disappear within the next few generations."

In the 1960s, Whitesburg lawyer Harry Caudill brought this perspective up to date in his classic book *Night Comes to the Cumberland*s, which attributed Appalachia's poverty to its people's ancestry, which he described as the descendants of street orphans, debtors and



The Melungeon “movement” reunites Appalachians by giving them something to be proud of.

criminals from the slums of England. Caudill later moderated his views, but the power of his writing and his position as a native Appalachian affirmed widely-held prejudices that Appalachians were defective people of a defective ancestry.

As it turns out, Caudill itself is now considered a Melungeon surname, and in a fascinating footnote Caudill said that the surname is of Spanish extraction. Through intermarriage with Scottish-Irish, a strain of “black Scottish” emerged, which Caudill described as “. . . people with swarthy complexions, heavy black beards and coal-black eyes, who contrast sharply with the brown hair and eyes and ruddy skins of the Scots generally.”

Race colors the debate

The Melungeon debate is more than a genealogical mystery. It has also revealed how the issue of race strikes a raw nerve in Appalachia.

Throughout time, many states have taken a hard line against mixed-race Melungeons. For example, in Virginia,

W.A. Pleckers — who ran the state Registrar of Vital Statistics— wrote in 1925 that “the mongrel groups of Virginia” were the lowest form of humanity — even lower than what he described as “the true Negro.”

Such attitudes affected all of society, right down to who owned Appalachian land. Darlene Wilson, a Ph.D. candidate in history at the University of Kentucky, made an interesting discovery when studying the papers of 19th century businessman John Fox Jr.

Fox and his brother James were in the business of acquiring mineral rights in Appalachia and had apparently encountered some difficulty in persuading some landowners to sell. Fox acquired the list of Melungeon surnames.

“John told him if anybody he encountered had these last names, idly comment that ‘Funny, you don’t look white to me,’” Wilson says.

The threat of being exposed as of mixed-race ancestry was enough to convince some in the mountains to sell their mineral rights — and surface rights, if they were really scared. “Which would explain,” Wilson says, “why people in the mountains sold their mineral rights for fifty cents an acre when the same land in Pennsylvania was going for much more.”

Others, such as Fields and Kennedy, found evidence in census records of people designated as “free persons of color” in Virginia who appeared in a later Kentucky or Tennessee census as white. The free persons of color designation

branded dark-skinned people — whether American Indian, African American or Mediterranean — as living with compromised rights to own land, marry and move about. When Kentucky and Tennessee formed the frontier, a new courthouse in a new county meant a new chance to gain the privilege of whiteness.

“The courthouse was where you got white, and you stayed white,” Wilson said.

Today in Appalachia, there are people like Connie Clark of Big Stone Gap, Virginia, who has always wondered about the strange silences and gaps when she inquired about her family history. “When I was young and would ask questions about where we came from, they always changed the stories, and that kept me wondering, do they know something they’re just not telling me?” Clark says.

After hearing Kennedy speak, Clark started her own research, and finally her mother admitted their Melungeon heritage.

Clark is now a proud Melungeon and answers phone calls from displaced Appalachians all over the country admitting that their family harbored secrets about their background.

Academic controversy vs. creating community

Some historians have scorched Kennedy’s book and attacked the idea that Melungeons are a unique American people.

Virginia DeMarce, a historian with the Bureau of Indian Affairs, recently traced several Melungeon families back to free blacks and argued vigorously in the *National Genealogical Society Quarterly* that meticulous research confirms the Scottish-Irish, African and Native American connection.

Even more scathing are the words of David Henige. In this spring's edition of *Appalachian Journal*, Henige blistered Kennedy's book, vivisectioning his arguments about linguistic similarities, his paucity of hard data such as census records and reliance on physical characteristics.

"In all this, Kennedy seems to have been taken in by Turkish historians just as Alex Haley fell victim to his African informants and Margaret Mead to young 'virgins' in Samoa. Exhibiting too palpable an enthusiasm to believe what one is being told is certainly no way to elicit objective data, nor for that matter to process it," Henige wrote.

When interviewed, Henige is at a loss to explain Kennedy's second printing and the wildly successful reunion in *Wise*. "Brent Kennedy is an awful historian," Henige says. "I think people want to feel oppressed."

Perhaps the Haley analogy is revealing. Haley, like Kennedy, captured the need of disenfranchised people — whose true past had been obfuscated by bigotry — to recreate a history they can be proud of. As coal companies retreat, and back-to-the-landers recede back-to-the-suburbs, Appalachians are left with themselves and are struggling to define what they are that can give them the pride that *Roots* gave African Americans.

The Melungeon "movement" reunites Appalachians by giving them something to be proud of.

As Wilson says, "For years, Appalachians were seen as a problem. But they were the first peaceful melding of cultures in this country."

SE

Judy Jones writes for the Lexington, Kentucky, Herald-Leader.

Are You A Melungeon?

The following last names are common among Melungeons. Melungeons say they may indicate Melungeon ancestry.

Adams, Adkins, Allen, Allmond, Ashworth, Barker, Barnes, Bass, Beckler, Bedgood, Bell, Bennett, Berry, Beverly, Biggs, Bolen/Bowlen/ Bowlin Bolling/Bowling, Boone, Bowman, Badby, Branham, Braveboy, Briger/Bridger, Brogan, Brooks, Brown, Bunch, Butler, Butters, Bullion, Burton, Buxton, Byrd, Campbell, Carrico, Carter, Casteel, Caudill, Chapman, Chavis, Clark, Cloud, Coal/ Cole/Coles, Coffey, Coleman, Colley, Collier/Colyer, Collins, Collinsworth, Cook(e), Cooper, Corman, Counts, Cox/Coxe, Criel, Croston, Crow, Cumba/Cumbo, Cumbow, Curry, Custalow, Dalton, Dare, Davis, Denham, Dennis, Dial, Dorton, Doyle, Driggers, Dye, Dyess, Ely, Epps, Evans, Fields, Freeman, French, Gann, Garland, Gibbs, Gibson/Gipson,	Goins/Goings, Gorgens, Gowan/ Gowen, Graham, Green(e), Gwinn, Hall, Hammon, Harmon, Harris, Harvie/ Harvey, Hawkes, Hendricks/Hendrix, Hill, Hillman, Hogge, Holmes, Hopkins, Howe, Hyatt, Jackson, James, Johnson, Jones, Keith, Kennedy, Kiser, Langston, Lasie Lawson, Locklear, Lopes, Lowry, Lucas, Maddox, Maggard, Major, Male/Mayle, Maloney, Marsh, Martin, Miles, Minard, Miner/Minor, Mizer, Moore, Morley, Mullins, Marsh, Nash, Nelson, Newman, Niccans, Nichols, Noel, Norris, Orr, Osborn/Osborne, Oxendine, Page, Paine, Patterson, Perkins, Perry, Phelps, Phipps, Prinder, Polly, Powell, Powers, Pritchard, Pruitt, Ramey, Rasnick, Reaves/ Reeves, Revels, Richardson, Roberson/ Robertson, Robinson, Russell, Sammons, Sampson, Sawyer, Scott, Sexton, Shavis, Shephard/Shepherd, Short/Shortt, Sizemore, Smiling, Smith, Stallard, Stanley, Steel, Stevens, Stewart, Strother, Sweatt/Swett, Swindall, Tally, Taylor, Thompson, Tolliver, Tuppance, Turner, Vanover, Vicars/Viccars, Vickers, Ware, Watts, Weaver, White, Whited, Wilkins, Williams, Williamson, Willis, Wisby, Wise, Wood, Wright, Wyatt, Wynn.
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Photos courtesy of Brent Kennedy's office.

Organizing for Dignity:

Lessons from the Grassroots after Welfare Reform



Photo by Valerie Coffin

IN ARKANSAS, ACORN'S WELFARE RIGHTS ORGANIZATION AND UNIONS HAVE JOINED FORCES TO CAMPAIGN FOR ECONOMIC SECURITY FOR ALL.

By Keith Ernst and Kim Diehl

While welfare has never been the supportive system that many believed it could become, recent changes have sent a signal to millions of low-income families and children that government will not provide assistance through hard times.

The carefully-balanced budgets of welfare participants have been thrown into disarray. Welfare offices have become paperwork nightmares. The rhetoric of "work not welfare" blares on, despite the contradiction between the need to nurture young children and the sub-living wages available to welfare participants. In the face of this reality, those who care about the fate of the South's and America's poor are left with one question: What now?

If there is a bright spot in the chaos resulting from "welfare reform," it is the energy of people who realize that real

change will come from the people most affected by welfare policies. Looking across the southern landscape, we have found a blossoming grassroots effort to clip the claws of reform and to build a movement for true economic security. As Sandra Robertson of the Georgia Citizen's Coalition on Hunger says, "People are ready to deal with this. We've had to take a few steps backwards, but we are building and organizing constituencies."

In this report, we offer a glimpse of the issues, strategies, challenges and lessons that are key to understanding welfare reform organizing in the South.

What is Welfare Reform?

Welfare reform has evolved out of a series of federal, state and, in some cases, local policy changes. The main fact that holds true across almost all communities is that there is no longer any guarantee of cash support for poor families raising children. This is why you hear people say that “welfare as we know it” has ended. Most other issues vary depending on where a family lives. But odds are your community has some of the following provisions:

Time Limits: There are generally two time limits that apply to how long welfare participants can receive benefits. Basically, all families receiving cash welfare assistance face a 60 month lifetime limit, whether the months are all at once or spread out over time. State law usually provides a shorter limit. For example, in North Carolina most families can receive benefits for two years and then are ineligible for three years.

Work Requirements: Even while families are receiving assistance, many will be required to work. The exact number of hours required per week and whether any families are exempted for reasons such as having an infant at home vary from place to place. Many women are forced to take low-paying, often dangerous jobs without regard to whether safe, affordable child care is available.

Personal Responsibility Contracts: These “contracts” are essentially orders from the state on what activities welfare participants are required to perform to receive assistance. In many states, welfare participants have to sign these papers before they can receive any cash benefits. Many welfare participants take the view that attending endless meetings and fulfilling other state-dictated criteria that seem irrelevant to their situation is not worth the \$50 a week they receive in cash benefits.

Increased Use of Sanctions: As the guarantee of government assistance has ended, states have gained more freedom to use different and harsher sanctions — including complete termination of cash benefits. Welfare participants are sanctioned for missing meetings scheduled during working hours, even though they have received as little as two days’ notice.

Limits on Appeal Rights: While not all states have limited rights, they have gained the freedom to restrict participants’ appeals. Welfare participants *do* have rights and should consult with legal aid or other experts when they think they have been unfairly sanctioned or turned away from assistance. Welfare participants are missing out on support they legally deserve because they have been told that they have no rights, only responsibilities.

Increased State and Local Welfare Planning: This is what welfare reform is supposed to do best, return control back to local communities. Unfortunately, it has served in some areas to make it harder to keep track of the effects changes are having on families. Given that local southern governments have been less dedicated to supporting social services, local planning threatens to concentrate control of welfare policy in the hands of people whose agenda might not reflect the best interests of the community.

Caseload Reduction: Under federal law, states can receive “extra-credit” for reducing caseloads. But the caseload reduction rates often boasted by governors tell little about whether families are achieving economic independence, or whether they are off the rolls simply because they are unable to comply with rules that often are designed to discourage enrollment. Experts say the reduction of poverty and the promotion of child well-being are better barometers of change.



CHILDREN ARE THE BIGGEST VICTIMS OF POVERTY IN THE SOUTH, WITH 26% LIVING BELOW THE POVERTY LINE. THE PERCENTAGE JUMPS TO ALMOST 29% IN RURAL AREAS SUCH AS EMMA LENA, KENTUCKY, WHERE THE CHILDREN ABOVE LIVE.

Southern Strategies for Change

To many newcomers, welfare issues quickly get very technical. Experts start to talk about benefit formulas, work requirement percentages and other complicated policy questions. But the reality on the ground isn't all that complex. In fact, organizers around the South routinely find their constituents facing common basic problems.

Welfare participants want better support from the state. They want social service agencies to respect their rights and their dignity. They have come to the conclusion that work without a living wage is often worse than no work at all.

And perhaps most importantly, they are asking the question government chooses to ignore: What is happening to those families leaving the rolls?

1. Demanding support, rights and dignity

Around the region, organizers and constituents are mobilizing to demand that policymakers provide support for families in need. To this end, communities want suspension of time limits, increased access to education, safe and affordable childcare and other kinds of support families need to make a real transition from poverty to economic independence.

The issue of education serves to highlight one of the internal inconsistencies in welfare reform: Policymakers claim that welfare reform will help lift families out of poverty, yet the changes they have made restrict the best way to get a job that pays a living wage—advanced education.

For many groups, access to education has become a main concern. Viola Wash-

ington, of the Louisiana Welfare Rights Organization, stresses the importance of legislation that was passed by Louisiana grassroots groups. Reversing the attitude of "work or else," the new law will "hopefully allow welfare participants to attend college, despite the fact that attending college does not help the state meet its federally mandated work participation rates."

Several chapters of the 2000-member Kentuckians for the Commonwealth (KFTC) have also identified "access to education for low-income Kentuckians and especially welfare participants" as one of their three main agenda items. As Virginian welfare participants asked, while lobbying a legislator in a state where welfare participants are barred from education activities while receiving assistance: "How could anyone get a job without a GED?"

The failure of policymakers to recognize that single mothers with children probably need *more* rather than less public assistance as they struggle to improve their education and job prospects is one of the many flaws in what has been called welfare reform.

When confronting policymakers, low-income community members are raising critical questions about the course of welfare reform. Mary Carey, a resident of public housing in Charlottesville, Virginia, put a Republican legislator on the spot. "I asked him, how are lawmakers gonna come to a solution so no one gets hurt? I knew him since he was a boy. Paul [the representative] already has his position — he's got his income, his law firm, his family. I asked him 'what about folks that don't know in a year if they'll have their family, or will they have to rob a bank to survive?'"

Other organizing efforts are targeting the administrative bodies in charge of social services. In those cases, community-based groups often find themselves fighting for what little rights welfare participants are afforded under the new laws or simply fighting to be treated with dignity.

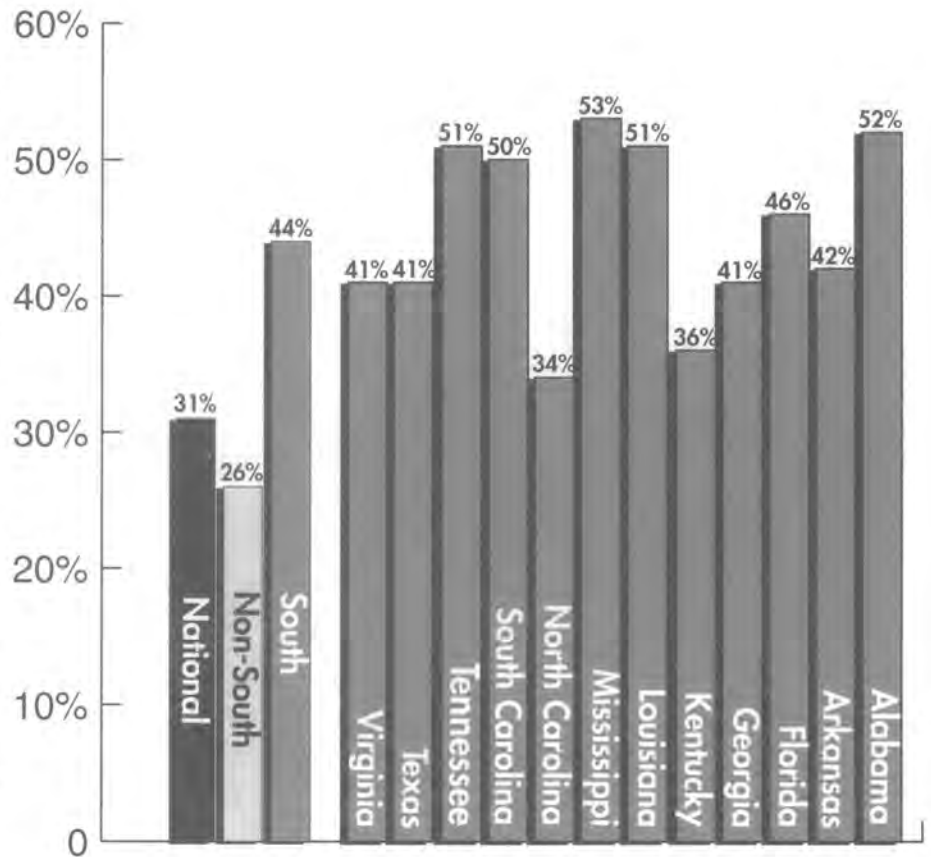
Mitch Klein of the Arkansas chapter of ACORN (Association of Communities Organized for Reform Now) described how the problems in his state mostly are focused on securing the rights that ACORN and allied community groups fought for at the state level.

ACORN and other Arkansas groups managed to ensure that recent state welfare reform legislation provide up to \$200 per child per month in child care, \$175 per month in transportation assistance and \$200 one-time in job search assistance. However, the legislation contains a loophole that allows this assistance to be paid out at social services' discretion.

According to Klein, the money is not exactly flowing. At one point, only \$94,000 out of \$6 million had been spent on these needs. As ACORN put it, "if Joseph and Mary came to the Department of Human Services, they'd have to wait 30 days for help." After exposing the problem, ACORN helped to get \$1 million child care

THE SOUTH LEADS THE NATION IN TERMINATING WELFARE PARTICIPANTS

Decline in number of welfare participants
9/96 - 1/98: By region and State



dollars into the hands of welfare participants in the first quarter of this year.

Arkansas agencies aren't the only ones dragging their feet. In Virginia, authorities are reportedly distorting the rules to kick participants off welfare. The state's law says that welfare participants are required to provide identifying information about their child's other parent — a measure designed to help the state recover the cost of providing assistance from absent parents' paychecks.

In reality, this provision has served as a tool to discourage applicants. "In case after case," says Rebecca Rader of the Community Empowerment Organization of Virginia, "women were going in [to social services] and giving the three pieces of information and being told that they were 'not giving enough information, we still can't

find him.'"

This tendency to discourage applicants arises from another fundamental flaw in the attempted reform of welfare: The federal law has given states an incentive to reduce caseloads without providing for adequate controls to make sure that families are leaving for good opportunities.

Often, welfare participants are merely looking to be treated with respect. Yvanka Weaver — who works 30 hours a week at Hardees, lives in transitional housing in Richmond, is raising a three-year-old boy and a four-month-old daughter and is enrolled in accounting classes at J. Sergeant Reynolds Community College — described what happened in her encounter with this policy.

While Weaver was participating in

Virginia's welfare program, she was called in for a meeting with a child support enforcement worker. According to Weaver, despite the fact that she provided all the information about her son's father that was requested, the enforcement worker threatened her by saying, "you need to bring him [the father] physically to me — and if you don't, I'm going to cut off all of your benefits."

"At first I was scared that my benefits were going to get cancelled," Weaver says, "that my child would go hungry, that I would be out on the streets with no medical benefits to care for my child." Weaver adds, "But after I found out that the woman lied, I was angry. It's wrong that they can do that to you."

Unfortunately, this kind of disrespect and intimidation is likely to continue if left unchecked. The overall emphasis of changes in welfare policy have been to place virtually all of the responsibility for escaping poverty on the shoulders of wel-

"Where we are organized," Klein says, "welfare recipients feel more comfortable demanding their rights and social services workers think twice before they sanction [welfare participants]."

fare participants. For their part, social services workers who want to be helpful face overburdened caseloads and rapidly-changing rules, forcing them to waste energy negotiating the system rather than helping families.

Participants are bound to their signed personal responsibility "contracts" and face severe penalties for failure to carry through on the deal. Yet, the lack of legal

protections under the new system leaves welfare participants with little recourse when social services don't hold up their end of the deal.

In such a climate, organizing has become one of the only solutions for participants in search of respect. "Where we are organized," Klein says, "welfare recipients feel more comfortable demanding their rights and social services workers think twice before they sanction [welfare participants]."

2. Get a job? How about a living wage?

Even when welfare participants do find jobs, they're finding it's no ticket to economic security. Most work available for those coming off the rolls are entry-level positions that pay at or near the minimum wage. For example, in Virginia, studies have found that the average pay for welfare participants when they enter the job market is \$5.50 an hour.

Photo by Kentucky Youth Advocates



KENTUCKY YOUTH ADVOCATES SPONSORED A LISTENING TOUR, VIDEOTAPING TESTIMONY ABOUT THE PROBLEMS WELFARE PARTICIPANTS WERE ENCOUNTERING AS A RESULT OF CHANGES IN WELFARE.

Wages: The South's Bare Minimum

Workers, especially former welfare recipients, are often forced to accept jobs at extremely low wages—and this is especially true in the South.

For most people and jobs, the federal minimum wage sets the lowest legal pay rate. Over the last 40 years, the federal minimum wage has ranged from a high of \$7.21 in 1968 to a low of \$4.24 in 1989 (both in 1996 dollars).

While the federal minimum wage covers most jobs, it doesn't cover everyone. For example, students, ap-

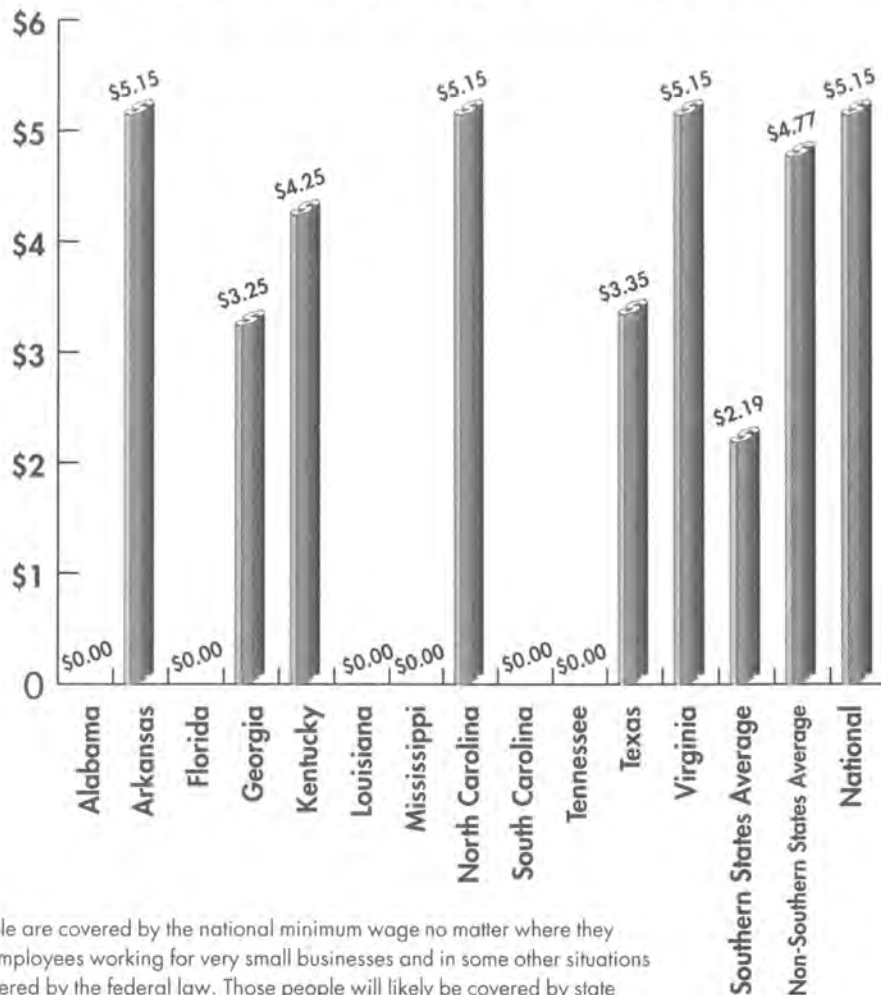
prentices and waiters as well as other workers who receive tips may be paid less than the minimum hourly rate. Certain small companies may also be exempt from the federal minimum wage law.

In cases where the federal law does not apply, states and even some local governments can set a minimum wage. The state can also set a minimum wage rate above that of the national rate and even replace the federal standard. For example, Alaska law requires that its minimum wage is always \$0.50 above the federal law.

The Southern Minimum

The South has the weakest minimum wage laws in the country. Among other facts:

- Of the 7 states that have no minimum wage laws, 6 are in the South.
- 9 of 20 states with minimum wages below the federal minimum wage rate are in the South.
- 0 of 7 states with minimum wage rates above the federal rate are in the South.



Note: most people are covered by the national minimum wage no matter where they live. However, employees working for very small businesses and in some other situations might not be covered by the federal law. Those people will likely be covered by state law, but in states without a minimum wage law or any local regulations, their employers can basically set the wage level at whatever rate they think is best.

Statistical information from the U.S. Department of Labor. Web site: <http://www.dol.gov>



THE GEORGIA CITIZENS COALITION BROUGHT 300 TO POOR PEOPLE'S DAY AT THE CAPITOL, WHICH INCLUDED OVER 100 CHILDREN. LOW-INCOME CITIZENS HAVE FOUND THAT SUCH ACTIONS ARE OFTEN THE ONLY WAY TO GET THEIR VOICES HEARD ON THE DECISIONS THAT AFFECT THEIR LIVES.

Realizing that families need far more to be self-sufficient, many southern groups have engaged in "living wage" campaigns. Some of these campaigns target a state or local minimum wage for an increase. Still others require a city or county and companies that contract with them to pay their workers a wage above the federal minimum wage (\$5.15 per hour) — or a "living wage" — that would bring people above the poverty line.

There's a lot of debate for what a living wage would pay. But these campaigns argue that anyone who works 40 hours a week should get a wage that supports basic needs.

One attempt to set a standard in the South came from the collaboration of the Washington, D.C.-based Wider Opportunities for Women and N.C. Equity, a women's public policy organization in North Carolina. Among other findings, they concluded that in Greenville, North Carolina — a small metropolitan area in a rural section of the state — a single adult with a school-age child and a teenager would need to earn \$8.08 per hour to meet

their family's basic needs. Their assessment of needs included: housing, child care, food, transportation, medical care, taxes, tax credits, miscellaneous items, and the size and age of families.

Community groups are using such findings to press for better pay. Encouraged by the fact that "a professional poll found that 75% of Georgians support an increase in the [state's] minimum wage," backers of an increase are working hard to build a base of support. The Georgia Citizen's Coalition on Hunger recently helped pull together a meeting of more than 400 at Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta to bolster an effort to increase the state's minimum wage from \$3.25 per hour to \$6.24 per hour. Similarly, the North Carolina Hunger Network recently held a press conference to launch a campaign to raise the North Carolina minimum wage.

And if wages aren't raised, some groups want to see public assistance help make up the difference. Welfare participants from the Louisiana Welfare Rights Organization have lobbied their Legisla-

ture — even "calling out from the gallery" — to pass a bill that allows welfare participants to keep up to \$1,500 a month for the first six months they are working, without a cut in public assistance.

But economic security means more than wages, and many southern groups have identified a broader set of conditions needed for families to be self-sufficient. These are well-summarized in a petition circulated by the Tennessee-based Solutions to Issues of Concern to Knoxvilleans (SICK), "We, the undersigned, believe that true welfare reform must include jobs with living wages, affordable health benefits, safe housing, quality child care and reliable transportation. All families deserve this."

3. Assessing the damage, clipping the claws of reform

A number of organizations have also realized that, despite President Clinton's cheerleading, there are major downsides to simply reducing the number of families "on the rolls." Why are families leaving the roles? What is happening to them?

Lynice Williams — who as Director of

Region-Wide Welfare Organizing Initiatives

Southern Organizing Cooperative

The Organizing Cooperative is a fledgling group of 15 local organizations who are putting their heads together to improve the state of grassroots organizing in the region and to bring greater resources and fundraising ability to community action in the South. Currently, the cooperative is organizing a spring meeting on the hows and whys of popular political and economic education as it relates to grassroots organizing. The cooperative also plans to sponsor anti-racist training for its member groups. (Contact: Burt Lauderdale, (606) 878-2161)

Highlander Center

Last October the Highlander Center, together with Southerners on New Ground and the Kensington Welfare Rights Union, convened the "North-South Dialogue on Building a Poor People's Movement." The gathering provided a forum for participating groups to share strategies in organizing poor people around issues of welfare reform, low-wage work and homelessness. Currently the Highlander Center is compiling a mailing list of poor people's organizations and a newsletter about the October conference. (Contact: Susan Williams, (423) 933-3443).

Children's Defense Fund Black Community Crusade for Children

In January 1997, the Children's Defense Fund Black Community Crusade for Children gathered 300 people in seven Southern states for a day and a half training session on states' options for welfare reform under federal law. The gathering focused on legislative approaches to influence state law, as well as on community monitoring activities to track families who go off welfare rolls but not to work. (Contact: Oleta Garrett Fitzgerald, (601)-355-1213).

Center for Community Change

The Center for Community Change provides a handful of southern local groups with technical support and is currently developing a grants pool to support grassroots organizing around welfare reform issues. Once a month the center publishes the newsletter *Organizing*, which describes different reform campaigns and suggests ways for local groups to respond. Call to get on the list to receive the newsletter. (Contact: Leigh Dingerson, (202)-342-0594).

Jobs With Justice

In December, Jobs with Justice helped coordinate "Days of Action" across the nation in protest of the harm being done in the name of welfare reform. As part of these activities, they co-produced a four-page comic strip that illustrates the contradictions within welfare reform. Every group should find this resource helpful. Currently, Jobs with Justice staff are helping welfare reform-oriented groups strategize to expand activities to include organizing around living wage and other issues important to the working poor. (Contact: Mary Beth Maxwell, 202-434-1106)

Foundation for MidSouth

The Foundation for MidSouth facilitates the local organizing of groups in Arkansas, Louisiana and Mississippi on issues of education, economic development and families and children. On Feb. 3 and 4, the foundation convened a regional meeting of community activists and state and local representatives. Using welfare reform as a starting point, the meeting planned to address services needed by poor people and develop strategy for future collective action, which could potentially involve reporting, mapping geographic data as well as planning other regional gatherings. (Contact: (601) 355-8167)

Fund for Southern Communities

The Fund for Southern Communities has responded with grant awards to two local groups working on welfare reform issues: the Georgia Urban/Rural Summit and the Georgia Citizens Coalition on Hunger. (Contact: (404) 876-4147)

—Lenore Yarger

North Carolina Fair Share is part of the state's Welfare Reform Collaborative — has discovered that "many counties are [cutting rolls] based on sanctions." Most of these sanction terminations have been for "being late or missing appointments" with social service workers, even though participants often had good reason.

Williams points out that for many southern welfare participants in rural areas, a trip to social services means more than personal responsibility — it means relying on the inexact science of buses and rides from friends.

But the bigger problem is that no one knows what is happening to welfare participants who leave the rolls under these circumstances. Many are too discouraged to try again for the average \$217 per month in assistance that welfare recipients are eligible for in the state. What are the consequences?

The N.C. Welfare Reform Collaborative is working with many organizations throughout the state to conduct a survey to find out what has happened to families that no longer receive assistance. Sample survey questions include, "In the last 30 days, have you or a family member gone without enough food for a day or more because you did not have enough money? If yes, please explain." Other questions ask for more detail about a family's economic situations and any loss of benefits.

Using a different tactic, the Kentucky Youth Advocates helped sponsor a "listening tour," traveling to videotape testimony from welfare participants about the problems they were encountering. Alabama Arise and the Alabama Organizing Project have used similar strategies. In Richmond, the Coalition for Virginians in Need has helped to circulate a survey of food pantries as an indirect monitor of the impact of reform.

A Plan Comes Together: Building the movement, one person at a time

Building a strong community organization, which is truly run by those it serves, takes a lot of hard work. Here is one organization's two-year plan to organize for change in welfare reform (all identifying information has been removed):

Form a Welfare Reform Group at Public Housing Complex

- ✓ 5-10 *active* members will be recruited.

Start a New Welfare Reform Group in a Low-Income Neighborhood

- ✓ Meet in community center.
- ✓ 5-10 *active* members will be recruited.

Form a Strategy Team to Coordinate the Groups

- ✓ Two active leaders from each group will coordinate agendas and strategy.

Be More Strategic in Our Recruitment

- ✓ Door-to-door knocking in targeted areas.
- ✓ Women, Infants and Children (WIC) office.
- ✓ Graduate Equivalency Degree (GED) classes.
- ✓ Department of Human Services (DHS) office.
- ✓ Plan Meetings with Legal Aid.
- ✓ Train 6-9 public speakers who can share our message.

Train Our Leaders: Workshops

- ✓ Leading Effective Meetings
- ✓ Public Speaking
- ✓ Recruiting and One-on-One Follow-Up
- ✓ Letter Writing
- ✓ Developing Good Strategy and Tactics
- ✓ Holding Public Officials Accountable
- ✓ Lobbying
- ✓ Improving Self-Image
- ✓ Domestic Violence

Providing a Quality Child Care During Our Meetings

- ✓ Children are in a caring environment.
- ✓ Children learn "community building" behaviors through songs, games, stories and activities.

Socialize

- ✓ At least once every six months, play!



Photo courtesy of GA Citizen's Coalition Against Hunger

WELFARE BILL OF RIGHTS

WRO



1. The right to be a member of a welfare rights organization.
2. The right to fair and equal treatment, free from discrimination based on race, color or religion.
3. The right to apply for any welfare program in writing the same day.
4. The right to have the welfare department make a decision promptly after application for aid.
5. The right to be told in writing the specific reason for any denial of aid.
6. The right to a hearing before your check can be reduced or cut off and before are medical aid is affected.
7. The right to appeal a denial of aid and to be given a fair hearing before an impartial hearing officer.
8. The right to get welfare payments

without being forced to spend the money as the welfare department wants.

9. The right to be treated with respect and dignity.

10. The right to receive welfare aid without having the welfare department ask you questions about who your social friends are (such as who you are going out with).

11. The right to have the same constitutional protections that all other persons have in America.

12. The right to be told and informed by the welfare department of all of your rights, including the way you can best make sure that you can get you welfare money.

13. The right to have, to get and to give advice during all contacts with the welfare department, including when applying, when being investigated and during fair hearings.

Welfare Rights

1707 Agriculture Street

Flier courtesy of the Louisiana Welfare Rights Organization

middle class volunteers from local churches and other community organizations to be drivers.

Lea Alexander explains that for SICK in Tennessee, child care became part of a strategy for encouraging involvement in meetings. "We pay child care folks \$7 an hour and try to hire low-income individuals as care providers." SICK also proposed the idea of having participants rotate the child care responsibilities every 15 minutes during their meetings. Burdensome, maybe, but also crucial to building a base. After all, as Alexander states, "How do we keep individuals involved who we want to participate, while acknowledging that they are struggling with serious issues that affect their families' very survival?"

Fighting frustration, demoralization and intimidation

The constant lack of meaningful responses and blatant apathy from policymakers often discourage participants from becoming further involved. For example, during a Welfare Rights Organization (WRO) meeting in New Orleans with policymakers, "the welfare participants in the room found out that some of the policymakers had not read the bill before they voted," recounts Viola Washington, the group's leader. WRO members were outraged. "It was difficult at best to move the conversation forward."

WRO's solution was to use was to invite participants to come to the next meeting an hour before policymakers arrived — giving them a chance to vent their frustration and develop a strategy for the meeting.

Mary Carey, a welfare participant in Charlottesville, Virginia, felt a similar lack of concern when she attended an event to speak to state legislators. "They didn't have the decency to show up. I kept saying, 'What are we here for — to ride up and down the elevators?' — the represen-

Challenges and Solutions

As with other mobilizing efforts, welfare reform organizing in the South has its share of barriers and challenges. Many organizations are using a combination of familiar organizing techniques blended with new strategies to overcome these difficulties.

Day to day challenges

How can we get people to meetings? What about child care? With public transportation and affordable child care both being scarce, many organizations start with these basic problems.

Both the Monticello Area Community Action Agency (MACAA) in Charlottesville, Virginia, and SICK recruit

tatives don't care about poor people. They just say, 'this money doesn't go into AFDC, let's build another road.'"

People on public assistance who choose to stand up for their rights often face the wrath of politicians seeking to preserve their "get-tough" image. Stephanye Goins, the former chair of SICK's welfare reform committee and a former welfare participant, remembers a meeting with Tennessee's state social services commissioner:

I was at the April 15th meeting and I was the main spokesperson. It was intimidating. She [the commissioner] started saying something about we can't raise [welfare] costs because taxpayers wouldn't like that. I had to bite my tongue not to tell her I was a taxpayer myself. Then, the director of the Knox City Department of Human Resources said that I shouldn't be complaining and 'if you would look past the end of your nose, you wouldn't be in the situation you're in.'

Such intimidation affects organizing. "When we go door to door," says Lea Alexander of SICK, "we can't say 'have you been affected by welfare?' because of the stigma associated with receiving public assistance."

But there are creative solutions as well. Says Alexander: "The state calls Family First Participants 'customers' — so we like to point out that the customer is always right!"

The Gospel Supper Club—A Healing Place, Inc., in Durham, North Carolina, is a spiritual development and social justice organization that helps people fight demoralization with faith. "They [welfare participants] have been so beat down and had such hard times," says founder Alease Alston. "Those holes in the soul have to be emptied of garbage, healed and sealed."

"We do workshops to deal with fear and internalized oppression from a spiri-

tual healing perspective," says Vernessa Taylor, a minister. "We help people hear God's voice to get them to still themselves and come out of a state of chaos and gain focus."

In addition to teaching economic literacy, Taylor says, "We do footwashings, laying of hands, intercessory prayer, preaching, political education, meditation, dancing, singing ... spiritual development undergirds them so they can stand up, gather their thoughts, speak out in forums and change their lives."

Both of these women know chaos. "We experienced the destabilization and oppression of welfare. It happened to me 25 years ago and it still impacts my family because my children were taken from me and placed in foster care," Alston stated. "I did not know my rights and my responsibilities to shape my life. Those policy-makers and decision-makers, they are not living what we experience. The best people to speak out are the people being impacted."

Taylor serves on Durham County's Work First Planning Committee. She made sure that people who went through the Club's healing process were allowed to present their views. "As they heal

themselves, they'll be able to serve on these committees. Without healing and spiritual development, there is no lasting sense of community."

Changing populations and unifying issues

Borders are often blurred when it comes to organizing the working poor and welfare participants. Rebecca Rader of the Community Empowerment Organization of Virginia found that organizing both segments is key: "Especially with time limits and sanctions, you recruit someone who is on welfare and the next month they might be off. Our rolls have decreased by 42 percent, so how do we keep the momentum up once people have moved off?"

But these challenges present an opportunity to bring people together. Welfare reform and the lack of a "living wage" have brought together labor organizations, working poor constituents and welfare reform groups. On December 10th—the 49th anniversary of the UN's International Declaration of Human Rights—welfare reform organizations and labor organizations joined forces in demonstra-

Photo by Kim Diehl



THE GOSPEL SUPPER CLUB DOES FOOTWASHINGS "TO HELP PEOPLE STILL THEMSELVES, TO COME OUT OF A STATE OF CHAOS."



REV. JIM McDONALD OF THE VIRGINIA COUNCIL OF CHURCHES READS A PRAYER AT THE JOBS WITH JUSTICE ACTION IN 1997 ORGANIZED BY THE WELFARE REFORM ADVOCACY GROUP.

tions across the nation coordinated by the national organization Jobs with Justice.

In Georgia, the Human Rights Union, formerly the Welfare Rights Union, held a joint meeting with the Atlanta Central Labor Council at a public hearing where 250 welfare participants, union members and concerned community members showed up to testify. Tameka Wynn, a full-time volunteer for the Human Rights Union summed it up: "We see human rights violations in welfare reform. It's not only about welfare rights, it's every right — from fathers to children to grandparents."

Bringing in resources

Every movement requires resources, whether it be snacks brought to meetings or money for a full-time organizer. Unfortunately, it is often difficult for organizing groups to get the funds they need to support their work.

One solution is to find support among those affected. The Arkansas ACORN chapter has enlisted more than 2,000 welfare participants as members and has

more than 1,000 members who pay their \$5 monthly dues by bank draft.

Organizations are also finding ways to attract foundation support. Fifteen organizations have come together to form the Southern Organizing Cooperative. Many of the member organizations have welfare reform as a main issue. While the Cooperative is designed to help organizations learn from each other and also to plan joint strategies, a central focus of its work has been leveraging additional resources. Some of these resources include funds from major foundations less likely to fund individual organizing efforts.

Carryin' On

In the face of seemingly unbeatable odds, people's organizing efforts are responding to the challenges of welfare reform. These groups are taking the time to support their members and to build leadership among those affected. They are finding issues that cut across constituencies, bridging gaps with labor and community organizations.

And despite the odds, there are victories. Some groups are finding success in the new-found confidence of welfare participants, ready to stand up and demand rights and dignity. For many, this begins with being treated as human beings. As Lea Alexander says, "The most important thing we do when we go door-to-door is listen to people."

Others are claiming victories in the halls of power. Some groups are demanding that officials attend their meetings and be held accountable. Others have successfully mobilized to reverse laws that punish the poor.

And perhaps most importantly, they are keeping the momentum for the next battle. "So many families and children are going to be negatively affected," says Sandra Robertson in Georgia. "But we can turn it around, and we are ready to fight. I've got my boxing gloves on." **S**

The authors would like to thank all of the individuals who took time out of their busy schedules for our interviews.

Local contacts for welfare reform organizing and living wage campaigns

Alabama

Alabama Arise, 334-832-9060
Alabama New South Coalition, 334-262-0932
Alabama Organizing Project/Greater Birmingham Ministries,
205-326-6821

Arkansas

AFL-CIO, 501-663-0901
Arkansas ACORN, 501-376-7151
Jobs with Justice, 501-375-1348

Florida

Florida Impact, 904-309-1488
Polk County Interfaith Alliance, 941-967-8437

Georgia

Georgia Citizens Coalition on Hunger, 404-622-7778
Georgia Urban/Rural Summit, 404-373-5169
Project SOUTH, 404-622-0602

Kentucky

Kentuckians for the Commonwealth (KFTC),
606-633-5803
Kentucky Youth Advocates, 502-895-8167

Louisiana

Louisiana ACORN, 504-943-0044
Louisiana Welfare Rights Organization, 504-944-1112

Mississippi

Mississippi Action for Community Education (MACE),
601-335-3523
Mississippi Hunger Coalition, 601-355-7495
Southern Echo, 601-352-1500

North Carolina

Charlotte Organizing Project, 704-333-1929
Junilee/NC Council of Churches, 919-467-4370
North Carolina Fair Share, 919-832-7130
North Carolina Hunger Network, 919-821-5300
Piedmont Peace Project, 704-938-5090
Southerners for Economic Justice, 919-682-6800

South Carolina

AFL-CIO, 864-370-9795
Carolina Alliance for Fair Employment (CAFE),
803-383-0389
South Carolina Fair Share, 803-252-9813
South Carolina Progressive Network, 803-808-5803
South Carolina United Action, 803-536-9376

Tennessee

Manna, 615-650-9929
Solutions to Issues of Concern to Knoxvilleans (SICK),
423-523-8009
Tennessee Industrial Renewal Network (TIRN),
423-637-1576

Texas

Jobs with Justice, 210-734-6655
Texas ACORN, 214-823-4580
TSEU/CWA, Dallas: 214-631-7863,
Austin: 512-448-4225

Virginia

Community Empowerment Organization of Virginia,
804-230-4633
Monticello Area Community Action Agency, 804-295-3171
Northern Virginia CLC, 703-750-3633
Roanoke Total Action Against Poverty, 804-984-4022

Resources

Decades of Distortion: The Right's 30-Year Assault on Welfare by Lucy Williams,

Political Research Associates (40 pages—12/97)
120 Beacon Street, Suite 202, Somerville, MA 02143.
(617) 661-9313 (\$10.00)

The New Welfare Law: A Handbook for Community Organizers Center for Community Change

3rd edition (41 pages—3/97)
1000 Wisconsin Avenue, Washington, DC 20007
(202) 342-0567 (\$5.00)

Community Toolbox: Strategies for Welfare Reform

John P. Kretzmann and Mike Green
Shelterforce (4 pages—12/97)
P.O. Box 3000, Denville, NJ 07834
(973)-678-9060 (\$5.00 per issue)

Together, this report, handbook and magazine article provide readers with a glimpse into the history, key provisions and some strategies for effective community-based response to the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (the main federal welfare reform law).

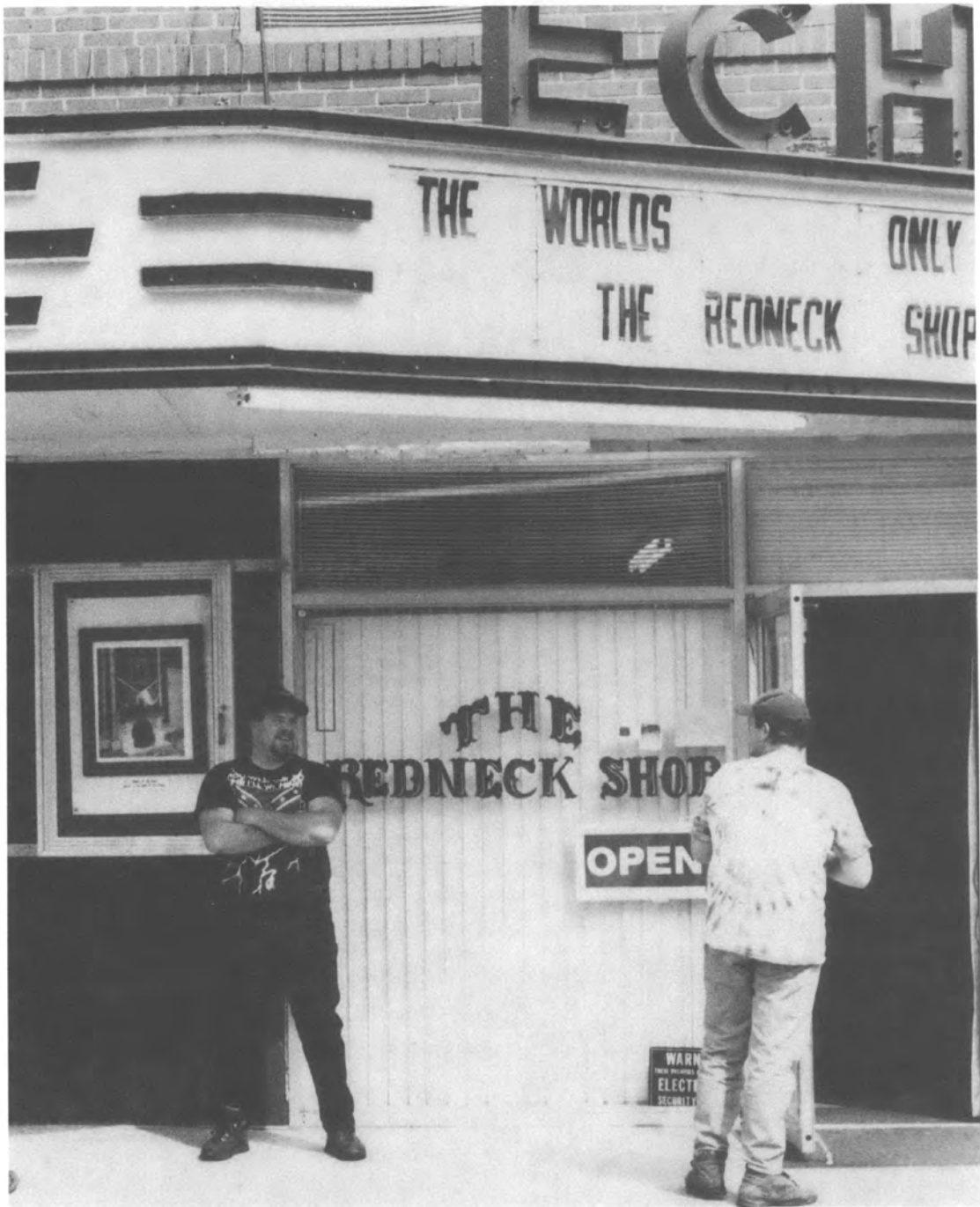
In *Decades of Distortion*, Lucy Williams documents how conservative forces used racist long-term strategies to undermine public support for assistance to low-income families. Her four main points are that (1) conservative attacks on welfare intensified when increasing numbers of African-American women gained access to assistance; (2) the political right used misleading imagery to promote a public perception of welfare as a program primarily benefiting African-American and Hispanic women; (3) conservatives framed advances of the Civil Rights Movement in ways that fostered white fears; and (4) the right promoted the "dysfunctional black family" stereotype to undermine support for welfare programs. While Williams' arguments do not specifically address the critical roles that class and gender played in the long-term destabilization of welfare, readers who choose her report will still gain a wealth of insight into the historical roots of welfare reform.

For those who have had enough history and who would like to learn more about what the law says and how to organize for meaningful change, the Center for Community Change has published its *Handbook for Community Organizers*. This report is certainly not for everyone. While it is written in clear, easy to understand language, it does contain (at 41 pages) a fairly long look at the law. But, for the committed individual who wants to help organize campaigns or teach others in their community about the new law's key provisions, this guide will be a welcome resource. Complete with examples of some communities' reactions, this publication offers not just a translation of the law, but rather a true guide in a context that activists will appreciate. What it will not provide is a great deal of detail concerning the state and local policies that have taken on increasing importance in the wake of federal reform.

Finally, for those who would like more ideas for how to help move their community forward, Kretzmann and Green offer several good examples of strategies to minimize welfare reform's harm and for trying to discover a positive course to change. To that end, the authors suggest steps designed to help concerned individuals create self-help groups to provide both moral support and assistance to welfare participants reacting to the challenges of the new system.

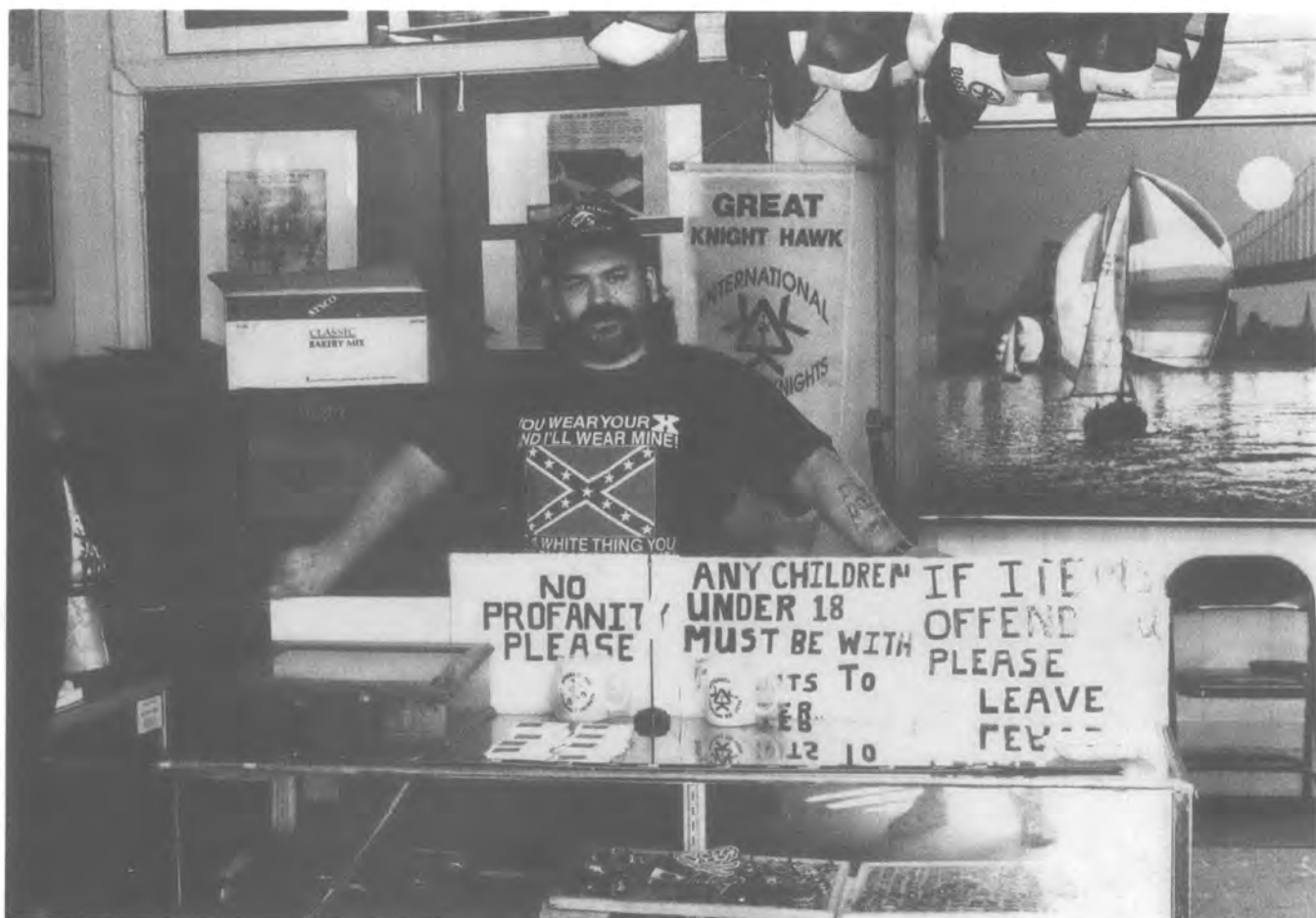
Kretzmann and Green acknowledge that "these community-based approaches ... exist in a larger context ..." and that "[a]nyone serious about welfare reform will recognize that larger issues of justice and equity" need to be addressed. This vague language masks a fundamental tension—should communities affected by welfare reform dedicate their limited resources to repealing or significantly changing the harmful law, or should they dedicate them to assisting families that have very real and immediate needs? While the writings reviewed here offer some facts and ideas, it seems that the fair way to actually answer this question is to ask it of those families most affected by the changes in welfare.

SE



The Redneck Shop

Photo essay
by Alan Wieder



In recent years South Carolina has received national attention for its racial antagonisms, spurred by events such as the flying of the Confederate flag over the statehouse and church burnings. Another chapter in the state's story of racial division began on March 1, 1996, when the Redneck Shop opened its doors in the town of Laurens.

Laurens is a town of 9,700 situated some 30 minutes southeast of Greenville. The store's proprietor is John Howard, who was an official in the Keystone Knights of the Ku Klux Klan. But Howard claims to be retired and says that the shop's purpose is to "teach people about the Klan, not spread bigotry."

When you enter the Redneck Shop what you see are Klan robes, photographs, T-shirts and even skulls that clearly spread bigotry. I walked through the shop shortly after it opened, while over 300 people had gathered outside in



people — both black and white — say the shop is not just a museum, but a meeting place and recruiting ground for the Klan.

The two year history of the shop has not been uneventful and the past year's events can be described as peculiar. Howard has claimed that he has been persecuted and sued an African-American city councilman for defamation of character. On two occasions rocks were thrown through the store's window and a Columbia man drove his van through the shop's front door. John Howard's son was jailed in May 1997 for spraying pepper gas in the faces of African-American teenagers outside of the shop and then charged that he was beaten in the city jail. It was in the early summer of 1997, however, when events took a strange turn.

The building that housed the Redneck Shop, the old Echo Theater, was owned by Michael Burden, a John Howard protege and young member of the Klan. The store was actually Michael Burden's idea, and he legally gave Howard the right to operate the shop with no rent for as long as he lived. But Burden and Howard had a disagreement that led to Burden being unemployed and homeless. Burden, his new wife and her two children were living in the back of his truck.

protest. The spirit inside the Redneck Shop was smug and hateful, while the spirit of those gathered outside, both black and white, was loving and hopeful. Despite the public outrage, however, the store still operates today.

Wearing black and white ribbons, people gathered in March for the rally organized by Rev. David Kennedy, who is the pastor at the New Beginnings Baptist Missionary Church in Laurens. One of those people was Becky McAllister, who said that "it makes me ashamed to say I was born and raised in South Carolina. I'm ashamed to be white. I want people to know that not all white southerners are racist."

Kennedy became involved because he wanted to stand with African American youth in Laurens who were extremely angry when the Redneck Shop opened its doors. Kennedy, who has photographs of Martin Luther King Jr. on his office walls, wanted to teach the possibilities of non-violent protest — a spirit that ran through the demonstration.

Over the last two years, there have been a number of smaller protests and national figures like Jesse Jackson have visited Laurens, but the Redneck shop is still in business. Some local





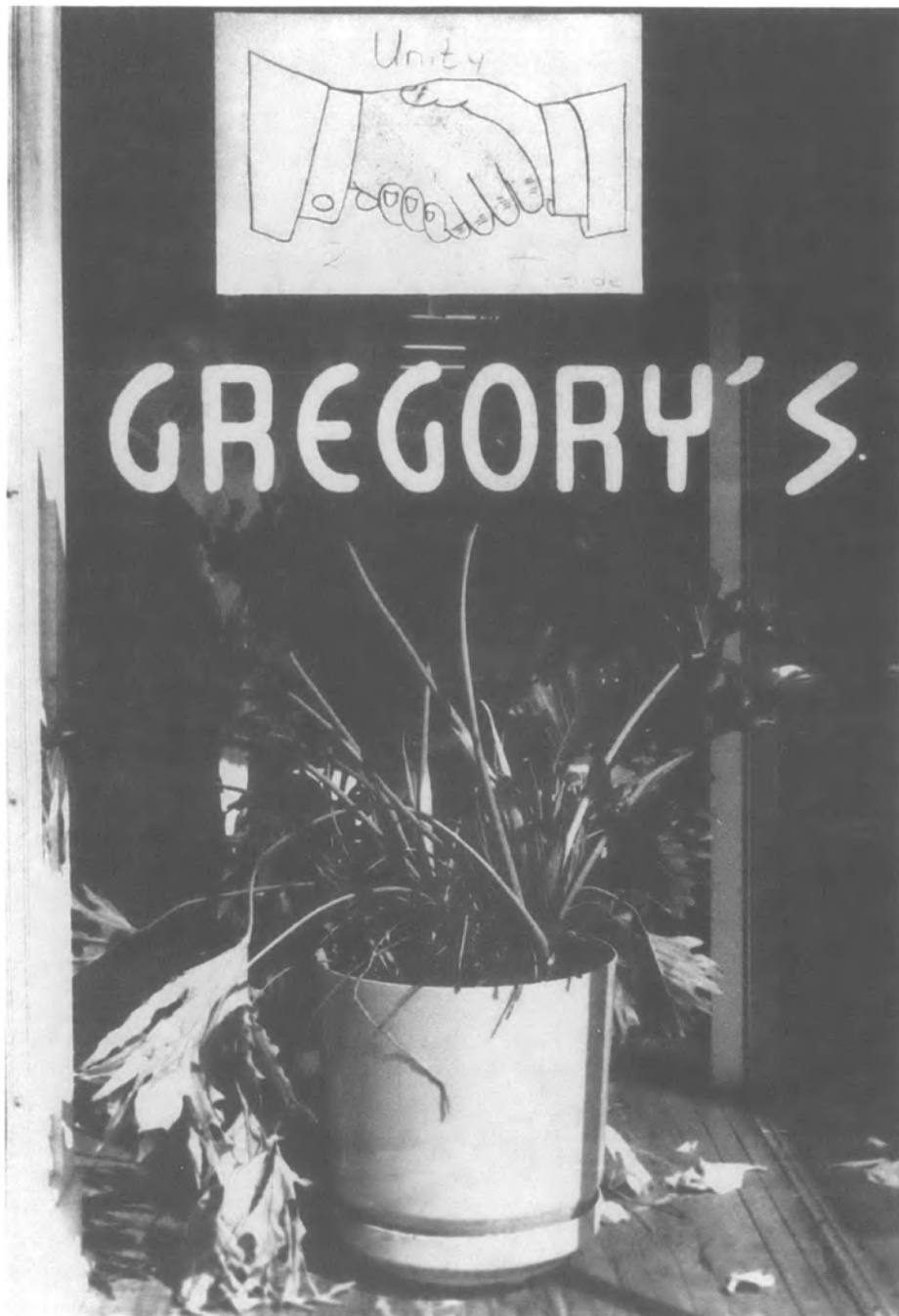
Who did Burden end up asking for help? Rev. Kennedy. The minister fed Burden and his family and found them a place to live. A grateful Burden went to the pulpit of Kennedy's congregation and publicly thanked them, while expressing regret to the African-American community: "I want to apologize for causing an eyesore on Laurens. At one point, I believed in this. But it was the wrong belief."

In appreciation to Kennedy and the church, Burden decided he wanted the church to have his building. Although Kennedy insisted Burden give it more thought, Burden was persistent and the church bought the old Echo Theater for \$1,000 — making the African-American church the new landlord of the Redneck Shop.

As if this irony is not enough, Burden is reportedly back at the shop.



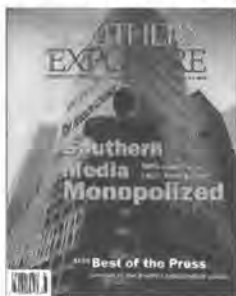




The story of the Redneck Shop is a peculiar one. But at essence it is about the ongoing battle between the institutions of racism and those like Rev. Kennedy who lead us in the continuing fight for unity. **SE**

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Holding Pattern at D.C. National

By Dave Shaw



Now it was night. It was nights before Walton got caught, finally arrested, nights before he finally let our neighborhood fall to relief and old routine. We were waiting up here on our hill for warm Jincy, Walton's lover, though Jacks and I didn't mention her, didn't even know we were waiting for her.

Jacks and I had sat silent with Walton while the neighborhood brick shadows stretched down below us, turned to lamplit broken glass, took the chill off the bottles in our hands. Jincy. That afternoon, she had cut the kid loose, dropped him without a whisper, and now it was night, distant smoke in our throats, on our skin, only smells. Jacks and I had a straight view to those slow-motion pieces of light on horizon, other people flying places, planes so slow they should have dropped. We were only waiting, watching, next to Walton the poet, wanting Jincy as much as he did in that damp night air, not knowing our own wants.

Walton's face only held enough cityglow and neon from Roo's Liquor sign to show his big eyes near glassy watching nothing or everything, maybe watching the panelights even then. We couldn't see National for the distant skyline, the pitch Navy Yards silhouette, Fort McNair, then Bolling Base, but Jacks and I knew the airport from the white lights crawling in and out. This hill we sat on was *our* hill, built off fallen stone and charred dust you still taste from a blazed-out slumrent, off

jagged blocks of concrete and plasterboard and empty 40 bottles, and wreckage long covered over now by city smog and dirt, and brown, dead grass. The grass cover almost took out the fire smell, forgot the wreckage underneath, made it feel like we sat on a true piece of mountain. Jacks and I were always waiting up here for something we couldn't explain. In the breezes, in an hour, somebody might say her name.

This Jincy was white, see, and from outside these blocks, and somehow Walton had spun the right words for her for some time. Couple of months at least the two of them were walking around. I'm white and she's the whitest white I've seen, the inside of sunlight. Walton's a brown. Jacks is pitch, watched him get blacker with his years. Not that this is a matter as much here. This might be a last place in the city where poor is the first color. Jincy wasn't poor, she was so white.

It was getting loud down in the neighborhood with new night noise, car motors, shouts, door slam echoes. It was too cool for November, but Jacks and I weren't cold yet—the drinks. Jacks the talent lit a cigarette with a swig of St. Ide's under his tongue. He sat in night shadow, bull's chest, bolt-up-right back, mostly lost in the dark.

"Where *do* these people go?" he said. More flyers crept off the orange haze into deep night.

"Anywhere," I said. "Buffalo."

Walton wouldn't make a noise. After awhile we couldn't help but imagine hearing him breathe and sweat and shiver, and we did wonder, finally — wondered still without admit-

ting wanting *her*—what a new dead heart used to feel like when we were just 19. Once before, couple of years before, Walton had tried to kill himself when he was cut loose. He took a shop-lifted bic, disposable mind you, and bungled the job. Snapped the handle, cut his arm with the jagged plastic and barely broke skin. His poetry had failed him that time, too. Those lines he wove to get this Latino off the Heights into bed with him—he must've started believing his own rhyme. Wide-eyed, hard-shouldered thinker, always under love believing his own poetry. Magicians believing in magic ought to know better.

Jacks and I were caught up in the cityline, though, the only civilized view in the neighborhood, trying not to let the boy's dead heart crowd out a few moments of contentment with the drinks and the view. Though Jacks and I knew better about this view. From here you could see the White House if you stood. We sat. Jacks always called it other people's view, those monuments and lit memorials and dark museums, red rooftop lights to guide in the planes, hell even the planes. Jacks always said it was other people's so we'd drop our cold empties and head to the street for refills or just to find home.



ut this night with Walton was early still. Air traffic was heavy, we wanted to watch. We drank our false heat, with those slow horizon lights without sounds, and everything became quieter than it could be. For a moment, a whole

minute, longer, we kept the quiet going. Jincy might come back. There was balance in the possibility of it, with those sharp white lights hanging mid-air out there, though Jacks and I knew better than to caring anymore about it. A deep black cloud ceiling started rolling in. The first short night breezes came up off the rooftops raising goosebumps we didn't feel from inside.

"She stole my windows," Walton finally said, and those quiet pearl lights that had swallowed us up spit us back out.

"What the hell you talking about, boy?" Jacks said.

"Jincy. She stole my windows."

"Jesus, boy, you always got to speak in code?"

Sitting between them I didn't want to be in the middle of this fight that was going to be about talking above your neighborhood. Jacks thought Walton's poetics was just a way of the boy trying to be more than he was, of denying he was three-quarters black and dirt broke and no better than the rest of us. Headlights coming, Roo's sign blinking split the damp shadows up the side of the hill, changed nothing up top or in the view. I knew Walton never was going to be more than neighborhood, but I didn't want him to give up his words either.

"You lose your windows," Walton said, "then you can understand."

"What the hell, boy, you think I can't get a damn metaphor or whatever? Give it up a little bit." Jacks spoke each stale word on the verge of cough. "Give your damn mind a little peace."

My grip went tight on the bottle, almost hot in my hand with

Illustration by Patricia Ford



unswallowed sips. This must've been my anger I was afraid, this grip, though I couldn't tell which one of them I was angry at, couldn't find a place to sit down my bottle. But Syl showed, I was grateful. She shouted up from the street at us, broke the feeling. "James Jackson, that you?" Syl shouted.

"Yeah," Jacks yelled down to her, "come up here, Syl."

"Beirut, you there, too?"

She should've noticed me first, because Jacks was almost invisible at night, but from the street the city lights must've shown on him more than me. People always notice him first when the two of us are together, even, for no reason, in hot daylight.

"Yeah," I shouted down to Syl, "I'm here." She had her hands on her hips, wearing her "Nubian Princess" shirt you could see even from up top the hill. Something silver in her ear held storelight from inside Roo's. "Come up, Syl," I said.

"Yeah, come up."

While Jacks and I watched her climbing up, hands and feet like cats', Walton must've crawled away. Once Syl was up and sitting next to Jacks, I remember worrying about Walton for a moment at first, but there was something different about this time with him. He had some little fight in him, this time, with his standing up a little to Jacks, instead of just quit in him like the other times he was a brokenheart. I let go of him. Jacks and Syl and I drank together on the wet grass, just the three of us, and took in those lights up off the skyline that seemed to defy gravity more the more. The lights seemed slower and slower, impossibly slow to keep afloat. They seemed even to stop sometimes, matted on space.



Soon Syl started treating Jacks and me like celebrities, calling us her men and squeezing Jacks' arm. Jacks knew Syl since she was 12, hanging on laundry line like circus wire three flights over street. That was before I was dropped here, though not much before. Jacks and I weren't dealing but we weren't on our way out either.

We were good enough for Syl, though, that night. Maybe she liked us because Jacks and I had the reputation for coming up here every night and she thought we were heavy thinkers. Syl was an easy mark for Walton with the romance she sees into people whether it's really there or not. Walton could sleep with her anytime he wanted. Maybe he already did. I was glad he slipped away because I could tell the way Syl was squeezing Jacks's arm and fingering his neck that Jacks was feeling young a little, enough to let the drinks do the rest of his feeling for him. Syl with her cajoling was relaxing him, easing those trenches in his face even though there wasn't enough light to see all his shadows loosen, see all his calm. We both felt calm with temporary Syl there. We let her occupy us, with Walton and that restlessness well gone.

"I'm shaving my head," Syl said. Her curls were cropped tight already, but she had good curves to pull it off. When Roo's sign blinked up, you could see her nipples pushing cold hard against her shirt.

"A Nubian princess' got to do what she's got to do," Jacks said. Jacks was married once, but somebody left somebody and

the story changed according to whether Jacks was on a drunk.

"She has to," Syl said.

"Beirut, we're on cash?" Jacks said to me.

"No," I said, "all we got's in these bottles."

So we saved our warm sips, talking for long stretches in between, listening to Syl tell about walking the Heights all drunk or knitting her Kente cap or trying to get on with cleaning at one of the Smithsonians. She pointed at one of the long black shapes on the cityline, said that was the museum where her aunt worked who might be able to get her an application. Her gesture was our only reminder for awhile that the rest of the city was out there. She talked about Billy's cats, creaks in her floors, smell of her mother's hot bread, even about a younger Jimmy Jackson always pleading with her to let him catch her from the clothesline. Backfires and short horn bursts echoed up from the alley wide streets. The 295 traffic sent rumbles up to us, cracks like lightning, people driving over road joints. For awhile there was screaming like singing coming off a fire escape we could only see in shadow a block away. The neighborhood was speaking up as Syl spoke her stories. We even listened to the breezes snaking through the long grasses on top of our hill, whistling through our empties. We even heard the bell clanging on Roo's Liquor door, everybody going in to get recharged. And all this, for awhile, lured us in like massage. With just the three of us on this hill, for awhile, the neighborhood background was strangely musical and peaceful and good, even the distant screaming seemed like opera song, the best buzz and peace we had in a long time. When the singing down a block stopped, there wasn't a larger question anywhere.

Then, without a warning, Walton came out of the shadows, making us feel like we'd been avoiding something. Syl noticed him first. "Walton," she said, her voice singing up her excitement at seeing him, "what're you doing up here?" Walton sat next to me, opposite end as Syl, crossed his hard arms. Syl didn't leave Jacks's big arm, but she loosened her grip.

"I was up before, left for awhile," Walton said, keeping his eyes out on the night sky.

"Where you been?" I asked him. Jacks was wondering, too, but wouldn't ask.

"Writing," Walton said in whisper.

"To Jincy?" I said, too quickly, without thought, without knowing I'd be wondering so quickly.

"The white one?" Syl said, more kindly than she could've.

"To everybody," Walton said.

Jacks lit another cigarette, struck the match so hard it seemed the flame came from his finger tips. "Give it up, boy," Jacks said. "Whoever 'everybody' is, they won't be listening, especially to you."



Everything peaceful left in a hurry. Jacks and Syl and I looked at our empties in hand like they might refill themselves at least by a swallow, give us a break from the silence Walton hung around our heads. The three of us started getting the cold shivers. I tried to break the quiet, tried to get Walton involved in our old conversations.

"Walton's got an in, too," I said. "You know, Walton, Syl's got this aunt at Smithsonian. Is it that one, Syl?" I said, pointing to the distant black rectangle I thought she spotted out to us before.

"Yeah," Syl was helping me, "Air and Space."

"And Walton," I said, "Walton has a cousin Derrick—Derron?—who's in Baggage at National."

"Really?" Syl said. "Walton, how's your cousin get that job?"

"That's a job," Jacks said. "Baggage at National. Walton, you in with Derron?"

But Walton wasn't answering, just staring at the white points of light stuck mid-sky, the red rooftop lights showing people where they left, and the billboards way out by 295 with their backs to us. That screaming down a block on the fire escape started up again, this time louder, a woman's yells and cut more desperate, but her old iron stairwell was mostly in shadow from up where we were. Some storelight off the alley that held the escape blinked red on the old grit bricks, lit the escape a little, nothing more than black shade moving its arms and yelling, like she was yelling up to us. The yelling started echoing and bouncing, like it came from deep out of the sewers, through the manhole covers, off the rooftops, instead of from some person, still like it was meant for us. Jacks's new cigarette smoke stuck in our lungs. We didn't move. When you move, to help, the yelling disappears, always, by the time you're there, out of breath heart banging out fear. We only were a little grateful for some neighborhood misery to distract us from our own damp quiet.

"That's some dream," Walton said, dropping in cold with his words. Might've been he meant the sky sights were a dream. I hoped through that shrill screaming down a block that's how Syl and Jacks would take it. That screaming. I knew though Walton meant to put it on Syl for making cleaning third shift at a Smithsonian some big new prospect.

"Think baggage, boy," Jacks said, reading Walton all the way.

A block off down that alley, somebody shined a flashlight on the screams, lit a woman. She went still. She was a black girl by herself wearing not a stitch, stuck on the escape two stories up facing us without a ladder to the street. She must've got high and had a window latch catch behind her after she climbed out. She tried to cover her chest up with her arms, cross her legs, turn away from her spotlight. Then she quit, stood there hands at her sides waiting.

"I'm cold," Syl said. She was never wearing enough either, the temperature was dropping faster than it should with that roof of clouds rolled in over the glow. The drinks were wearing off, it could frost.

The fire escape girl leaned on an iron rail, exposed and naked, thin, given up on hiding anything, still waiting for what was next. "I'm really cold," Syl said. With the clouds in, the sky was holding more orange citylight. Syl nuzzled herself into

Jacks some more. It was hard to tell how old the black girl on the fire escape was from up on the hill—16, 17. She stood motionless, propped on that black rail, a frozen statue, from up here. We couldn't help her staring past the flashlight, trying to see who lit her up bare.

She wasn't real.

Somebody cut their flashlight and the naked black girl was gone. We braced a little for the screaming to start up again.

"Ready, Jacks?" I said.



he screaming didn't begin back. Jacks looked straight ahead. Syl had her head down, moved a finger around the wet lip of her empty.

"Jacks, ready?" I said. I turned to Walton to tell him we would head, but in the soft orange light he was smiling, only catching some cold light off the city unless a flash from Roo's sign. I wondered what gave him any right to be so smug, like he was putting it on all of us for being mere average sprawlers. Somewhere else I would've had more the right than him but I didn't act it. I threw my empty over my shoulder. The bottle clinked, wouldn't break on something behind us. I saw only what Jacks

saw in Walton, then, this smug pretender sitting himself over us. I hated him like Jacks did.

"Let's go, Jacks," I said.

"Something's wrong," Jacks said without turning to me. I thought he meant with the naked girl at first, meant that some neighbor didn't have a favor in mind for her, but she was already just deep purple memory, afterimage, breeze.

Then I realized that Jacks and Walton both knew something, that

whatever Jacks was talking about was the same thing that Walton was smiling at. Walton wasn't being all smug with his smile. He and Jacks were into something I didn't know.

"What?" I said. "Syl, you—?"

"Beirut, hush it up," Jacks said.

So we sat there and everything went coldly quiet, no rooftop breezes even, city sounds still, as if they were silent just for Jacks.

"Something's wrong out there," Jacks said again.

"I see it," Walton said.

"Somebody give me a goddamned clue, please," I said.

"Beirut," Jacks said, "how many lights we count at most ever?"

Then I saw what they saw. One night two years before, it was high clear out and Jacks and I counted 41 panelights coming and going from National, hanging on the view above skyline. Usually we saw 18 or 20 planes at one time on regular nights, six, seven, less in fog. But this night, for a cold clouded night with the cityglow as strong as it gets, there were too many lights. "What?" I said. "How many are out? 45? 50?"

"I got 56," Jacks said. He'd been counting through the

When the singing down a block stopped, there wasn't a larger question anywhere.

screaming.

Walton had, too. "I got 62," he said, gesturing off right toward Bethesda and Wheaton, "counting these off pattern up North." Looking out north, he had the back of his head to us but I knew he was still smiling. I started counting pieces of light as fast as I could.

"There's six more must be sitting out past Alexandria," Jacks said, checking South.

"What's going on?" Syl said like she'd been drifted off.

"It's the planes, Syl," Jacks said.

"What?"

"There's too many."

"Too many for what?"

"For National," Jacks said. "Planes coming in but none putting down."

"Seventy-one!" I said. "Christ, I got 71."

"Seventy-four," Walton said. He had turned behind us to look out East, which never had a view but black sprawl haze, but tonight had nine more shimmers hanging mid-air.

"Eighty-three," Walton said. "That's 83."

"Sky's filling up," Jacks said.

"Everybody's knocking, but nobody's answering the door."

"Why aren't they landing them?" Syl asked.

"It's holding patterns," I said.

"Something's wrong," Jacks said, "at National."



We watched the sky start to fill up with landing lights that wouldn't be used to land, with new stars inching into view, crowding out the sky, picking up patterns in layers over the city, and way out into the sprawl, hanging just under the high roof of clouds and as low as a few hundred feet above ground, every height in between. Some of them circled slowly at heights low enough it seemed to graze the Monument, seemed ready to land on The Mall, clip the flags off The Hill. The first engine roars, still distant and too high, began to pull us in. There were silent patterns we couldn't see, too, in the icy cloudbank and above, stretching up as far as we could imagine, everybody waiting for National to say okay, come on in.

"Let's go," Jacks said.

"What do you mean 'let's go'?" Syl said. "It's beautiful."

"Other people's view," Jacks said. "Let's go."

"It's our view," Syl said, "and it's beautiful."

"Aesthetics," Walton said, trying to be beyond us, "balanced aesthetics."

"Fools, two of you are fools," Jacks said. "Beirut, you listen to this?" Jacks was tensing me, but he and Walton couldn't both be in the know and be dead opposites, and Walton had already riled me, too.

"What happened at National?" said Syl. "How's a view like

this come up?"

"Who gives a damn?" Jacks said. "You're all three suckers. Who gives one damn?" He struck a new match to ridicule us.

But I still wanted to know. Despite all the nights Jacks talked about recognizing the skyline for other people's view, I still wanted to know what was on at National this night. The patterns for these planes were clogging up everything now, lights like pinpricks stuck on distant black, closer crisscross routes, even some visible landing gear down overhead and behind us. Some plane routes, those closest, lowest planes that expanded their patterns to over our hill and behind, were so low and close now we were starting to understand the speed in them for once, to feel the violence in the noise of their engines. Now we could understand the sheer force in the planes, how they flew so easily, and I wanted to know why everything was different to-night.

"I'm with Syl," I said. "What the hell is on at National, I want to know, and what the hell's so wrong in wondering?"

Jacks drew hard on his new cigarette, wouldn't even acknowledge me with disgust.

"Brother Jackson here won't let you think it's your city, too," Walton said, "like you got some stake in it, is what it comes back to. Right, Brother Jackson?"

"No shit, boy," Jacks said, "only without the sarcasm."

You think you got stake in this town?"

"I know what's on at National," Walton said.

Jacks wouldn't bite. Syl and I were dying to ask if Walton knew what he was talking

about, but Syl — Jacks scared her off any more questions. I didn't say a thing either. It was frost cold and I was hating Jacks too hard, hating him for being right, deep down I knew he was right.

"Bomb scares," Walton whispered.

"What?" Jacks said.

"National has some bomb scares over it," Walton said. Another smile broke out, lit up his eyes.

"Walton," I said, "could be anything, could be—"

"It's bomb scares," said Walton.

"How is it bomb scares?" Syl said.

"O.K.," Jacks said, "yeah, how is it bomb scares?"

A low flyer shook us for a second, the lowest plane yet, pulled rumbles behind it away off the rooftops toward National.

"Poetry in motion," Walton said. Then he laughed.



when it all made sense.

Walton, brokenheart loverboy from the bottom of the hill, had sent one last poem to dear whiter-than-white Jincy, with a few phone calls shook the stars clean out of the sky for her.

Despite all the nights Jacks talked about recognizing the skyline for other people's view, I still wanted to know what was on at National this night.

"Too many to count," Jacks whispered, his face like he was eyeing the lights out of focus, letting in the dream, "too many now."

Another low flyer scared us off our thoughts. The roars faded, boomed against each other down in the streets. Other planes flew closer. Syl shivered. The city was fireworks with the glimmers.

"That's one lucky white girl," Syl said.

"It's to everyone," Walton said. "Not just Jincy."

I sat next to plenty of thugs, dealers, users, knock and enter types in that neighborhood, but I was never having trouble swallowing like I was there next to Walton. He was nothing more than common crime with this stunt, except he was everything more, too, poet pretender, street poor black, governor of the town at the same time.

"Too many lights," Jacks said again, still a little lost from us, like the planes were flying around inside his head instead of all over the city.

"How do you like it, Brother Jackson?" Walton said. "How do you like my poem?"

The air was frozen sharp. We were bracing for another plane to shake the neighborhood. Jimmy Jackson's brow doubled creases with the prospect of Walton being the true author of it all.

"You run out of paper?" Jacks said.

"You like it?" Walton said again.

Jacks tossed away his last butt still a little lit. "Yeah," he said, starting up a deep grin, "I do like it. I like it much better, now that I know who it's by."

Then, around the four of us, our hill started filling up.

Hard engine rushes carrying through alleys, landing lights dissolving street shadows, these planes shaking sky just above drew people out of Roo's and broken window panes. Somebody said National was on T.V. with its bomb scares. Everybody wanted to come up to see it, see the glitter pasted around the sky, feel the hill shift under engine shock. Everybody wanted to see what happened when the rest of the world had to just stop and wait, fly in circles, pray for some ground. Everybody wanted to see who did it, see how it is that one of us could have this kind of effect on scenery. Eventually the planes even stirred the old hard use out of their cracks, still holding their empty broken car antennae pipes like Teddy Bears.



We all sat on the hillside, a few dozen at first, then soon a hundred or two, taking turns congratulating Walton with back slaps and jibes and murmuring at moving sky, and Jacks laughing all the time his old thick smoker's laughs. We knew the poem for Jincy wasn't just from Walton. He meant to show her from the rest of us, too, all of us there on our hill. We didn't know quite what to do with that kind of knowledge. Later, not that night, later we'd be a little scared we ought to do something with it.

All of a sudden somebody said Roo's Liquor lights were out,

and they were, which meant Roo was closed already, at nine-thirty, that even Roo was watching the stark lights crisscross near collide somewhere on the crowded hill with us. "You got some audience, Walton," Syl said to him softly. Even Roo was out here in the cold now, watching the new pinpricks blink into view, and none of these new flashes in the full sky could land. We all went quiet. Some new peace was coating us.

Then this came, at once, immediate, without a warning.

Heavy helicopter roars, pounding down on the grasses, hard winds from the copter blades blowing away sound. The machine hovered for a moment, put us under the spotlight, exposed us all. Wind burnt our skin, sent the cold through bone. Syl, Jacks, me, Walton, all the rest of us on our hill, we squinted away the light, covered ourselves hoping for God, then lowered our arms, stared into the hot light. My hands were sharp white, so were everyone's. Then, just as fast, the spotlight rose and the helicopter was gone, ripping up sky behind it. Walton laughed. It started to snow. The snow wet our faces and hands, got in our eyes, we were looking up, still seeing rings from the helicopter light. We'd re-routed half the air traffic on the East Coast and now it was snowing.

We'd re-routed half the air traffic on the East Coast and now it was snowing.

Jimmy Jackson stood up, alone, unnatural, the bull up on his hind legs, stood for the first time in forever, like that night had been forever, his bones cracking together. He pulled Syl up, too, stretched his arms out after she was up. Only his stretching pulled this old piece of memory from a buzz or a night on the way to

one, some moments and a lost view of Jimmy stretching that I once saw. I remembered first walking the alley, looking up, seeing a black girl sitting in shadow on her fire escape. She had her dress on then, silent, nothing to think of. She smoked some joint, watched over the rooftops in the direction of our hill. I smelled her joint down in the street. The buildings split, I glanced up a block. There was Jimmy Jackson, standing, stretching then too, arms out, waving, reaching for air, making shadowy snow angels in Roo's empty liquor lights, empty black air. Red neon blinked out, and Jimmy Jackson was gone, then back, then gone, black snow angel, top heavy for a moment, then nothing, just black, only Roo's Liquor lights giving him shape. I didn't look back to the black girl, went to drink away what I saw, lost Jimmy in the buildings as I scuffed. She might've seen him for a moment — just a flicker, just a ghost, his own angel.

It was gray snowing now on our hill. Jimmy Jackson stood still with Roo's neon out, stood against orange city sky dark solid as a monument. Syl swayed, Jimmy steadied her. It was quiet. Walton's poem was clearing itself up. Shimmers roamed into black, disappeared. I was dead cold. I thought about them finding me the next day under a warm coat of white snow. I stared up into the flakes, swirling gray, lost all point of ground, and forgot where I was.

SE

Carryin' On ... Without Color:

New anthology of southern gays and lesbians is useful, but where are the non-white queers?

By Kim Diehl

The title of this collection of essays was inspired by the author's grandmother's frequent scolding, "Ya'll better stop that carryin' on." Carryin' on can mean, Howard says, "havin' a good time. Slightly naughty, but fun." Placed in the southern context, carryin' on can mean raisin' hell, coming out, being proud of queerness or confronting the evangelically-influenced social and political structures of the region.

The book discusses a variety of themes pertaining to the construction of queer* identity and community in the South, but the core question is: What makes sexuality deviant or mainstream when placed in contexts of race, class and gender?

But this book is by no means a complete historical analysis of homosexuality in the South. The title should read, "Carryin' On in the White Lesbian and Gay South" — to say the least, this collection left me thirsty for the experiences and perspectives of southern queers of color.

The first two essays are "Writhing Bedfellows in Antebellum South Carolina" by Martin Duberman and the story of a nineteenth-century Georgia lesbian by Elizabeth Knowlton. These pieces left me wondering if the point of the anthology was to analyze only white queers' acceptance in the upper- and middle-class South.

Fortunately, the series of essays that came under the heading "Ordinary Men and Would-Be Women: The Cold War Era" took a broader view. It is the strongest and most startling part of the book, revealing the brutal and unconstitutional repression of southern homosexuals.

"Closet Crusaders: The Johns Committee and Homophobia, 1956-1965" by James Schnur lays out the history of the committee's witch hunts, designed to



Carryin' On in the Lesbian and Gay South

Edited by John Howard
New York University Press, 1997

"investigate any person or organization that violated customs and traditions preserving racial segregation." These investigations targeted state employees, and, most frequently, teachers who were allegedly homosexual.

In the minds of the Johns Committee, alleged homosexual activity was "any perceived threats to their way of life." The committee's files scream McCarthyism: "Do you know, or have you known in the past, any teacher in the public school system of this state who is a homosexual?"

The next article, "Race, Class Gender, and Sexuality in Pre-Stonewall Charleston" describes the exceptional story of Gordon Langley Hall, an intersexed author who resided in the "sizable homosexual community" in the Anson-borough area of Charleston, South Carolina. Hall, who had a sex change in 1968 and

changed his name to Dawn Pepita Hall, wrote: "It really didn't phase Charleston all that much. I had a lot of money then and a very good family background."

This changed, however, after Dawn fell in love and married a black working-class man named John-Paul Simmons, making it "South Carolina's first mixed marriage. [Charleston's] *Post and Courier* placed the wedding announcement in the obituary section." In this case, "despite a historical tolerance for eccentricity among the leisure classes on matters of sexual behavior in general and of transgenderism in particular, such behavior [are] sharply reproved when the 'offender' crossed the social class or racial boundaries."

Three other articles analyze the building of lesbian subcultures in Memphis, Louisville and Atlanta in a section of the book titled, "Lesbians, Communities: The Mid-to-Late Twentieth Century." These chapters trace the origins of working-class and middle-class white lesbian culture and community from the 1940s through the 1970s.

The anthology is written primarily for an academic audience, and I can see it being helpful in college courses, because so few southern queer materials are available. But I hope readers are not fooled by the title and recognize the startlingly huge gaps of color in the collection.

* I should note that I opt to use the term "queer" because I feel it is both a political choice to turn around a derogatory term and claim collective ownership, and it also covers those people whose sexual orientation or physical sex falls into the periphery of what is considered mainstream. Thus, this term includes lesbians, gays, bisexuals, intersexuals, transsexuals and cross-dressers.

—Kim Diehl

New Southern Media

Fiction

My Drowning

By Jim Grimsley
Scribner paperback, 1998

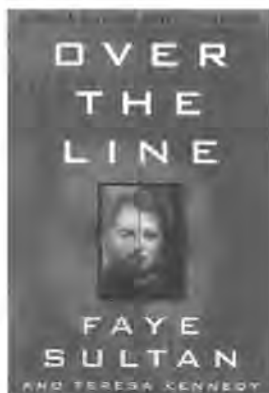
Award-winning author Jim Grimsley's latest novel is the story of Ellen Tote, who grew up in rural North Carolina during the 1940s. As the protagonist searches her memory for the meaning of a recurring dream, she drifts into fragments of her youth, dominated by harsh poverty, violence and superstition. Grimsley beautifully uses elements of magical realism to soften the edges of this tragic story, but his voyeurism of "poor white trash" family life offers negative connotations reminiscent of Caldwell's *Tobacco Road*. The novel redeems itself, however, through its tender prose and the resilience of the main character who manages to survive her past. A gratifying read.

— Florence Tonk

Mystery

Over The Line

By Faye Sultan & Teresa Kennedy
Doubleday, 1998



This thriller features Portia McTeague, a forensic psychologist who specializes in mentally ill criminals plagued by violent childhood traumas. What makes the book interesting is that McTeague's fictional character is based on Faye Sultan's real life as a criminal psychologist in North Carolina. With the help of professional writer Teresa Kennedy, Sultan offers a mystery that asks not "who-done-

it?" but "why-did-he-do-it?" In doing so she exposes the inequalities of the American criminal justice system in a way that only an insider can. A staunch opponent of the death penalty, Sultan has served as an expert in over a hundred capital murder cases in North Carolina and gained national notoriety for her efforts to televise an execution on the Phil Donahue show in 1994.

— Florence Tonk

Video

Sustaining Rural Communities

By Coalition for Jobs and Environment and Appalshop Films 1998

This is an inspiring short video about how ordinary people with few resources can keep their communities alive in the face of drastic economic dislocations. Here we meet timber cutters who use horse-drawn logging to preserve the forest and organic farmers who are prospering through community-supported farmer's markets. I took a personal interest in the story of a student health organization — much like one I had worked for in North Carolina — which citizens credit with reviving a failing mining town, by setting up a free, community-run health clinic. The effort snowballed, inspiring others to set up a fire department and other self-run institutions. The video doesn't address all the problems created when mining barons or other corporate powers wreak havoc on a small town. But it gives us a start, and other

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community groups would benefit from documenting their efforts this way. Contact CJE at (540) 628-8996.

— Chris Kromm

Media Activism

How to Tell Your Story:

A Guide to the Media for Community Groups and Other Non-Profits
Center for Community Change, 1997
"Using the Media," Organizing for Social Change

By Kim Bobo, et al.
Midwest Academy/Seven Locks Press, 1991

Out of the dozens of resources that claim to have the low-down on how to get the press to cover your stories as an activist, the Center for Community Change (CCC) has published the best I have seen. I also review here a nifty chapter on "Using the Media" nestled away in the Midwest Academy's timeless resource for activists.

The CCC publication is a great and inexpensive resource, printed in short (two- to four-page) sections that you can digest while waiting for a meeting or riding the bus. Like most media guides, *How to Tell* does a fine job of helping you design and write press releases and other tasks. Much more importantly, though, it has been constructed to help community-based organizations develop a "communications plan" — in other words, how will your group relate to the larger public? These features, combined with a case study and a thorough listing of other resources, make this guide unbeatable. There are volume discounts. Contact CCC at (202) 342-0567.

In 1991, Midwest Academy published *Organizing for Social Change*. While the publication is seven years old, the information is still relevant for the college organizer or the movement veteran. The real strength of the "Using the Media" chapter is the checklist for a press event. This one-page guide will help you remember details such as scouting locations for electrical outlets or designating your own photographer for an event. Call the publisher at (800) 354-5348.

— Keith Ernst

PIRATES

By Mary Lee Kerr

*Have you heard of Teach the Rover,
And his Knavery on the Main;
How of Gold he was a Lover,
How he lov'd all ill got Gain.*

— From a song printed in the *New England Magazine*,
June, 1898.

Edward Teach, better known as Blackbeard, was one of dozens of pirates who raided merchant vessels along the Atlantic coast in the early 1700s. While hundreds of crews from European ports raided and pilfered the Americas in the name of their countries, Blackbeard and his pirate compatriots claimed the booty for themselves.

Blackbeard, an educated Englishman, was one of the South's most notorious pirates. He roamed the southern seacoast searching for ships to raid, sticking smoking matches in his thick dark hair and beard and knives and pistols in his clothing to produce a devilish aura. One of his most notorious attacks was on the port of Charleston, South Carolina, where he and his crew blockaded the city for a week, capturing several merchant ships, holding hostage a member of the governor's council, robbing gentry in the streets and stealing medicines to keep on board his ship.

North Carolina was his home, however, and he had hideouts in the town of Bath and one on Ocracoke Island. The colony's governor, Charles Eden, is believed to have had a friendly relationship with Blackbeard and turned a blind eye to his exploits, perhaps even sharing in the ill-gotten gains. When North Carolina residents could no longer endure his pillaging, they asked Gov. Alexander Spotswood of Virginia to intercede. The legendary pirate was beheaded in the ensuing battle with British military ships. His death in 1718 was said to have brought an end to the age of piracy.

Piracy also provided an exciting alternative career for adventurous women who didn't fit into the mold of 18th century womanhood. Mary Read posed as a man and fought with the British Army and Royal Navy before she joined Calico Jack Rackman's pirate ship. Read's compatriot, Anne Bonny, escaped an unhappy marriage to ally with Rackman. Both were captured and sentenced to hang, but Read died in jail and



Bonny is believed to have been ransomed back to her home in the Carolinas by her father.

Pirates of old are still causing scandals today. Plans for a pirate museum in Tampa were scrapped when financial backers became wary of racial issues surrounding the artifacts. The artifacts' origin was a 18th century ship designed to carry slaves that was later captured by pirates. Opponents of the museum were concerned that the story of slavery would not be given adequate treatment; by the time a bi-racial committee had formed to address the issue, the financiers had pulled out.

Shipwrecks were as common as pirates along the southern coastline, where the shifting sand of off-shore islands such as North Carolina's Outer Banks stranded thousands of vessels. Nearly 300 years after Blackbeard ran aground in Beaufort Inlet, a private company called Intersal, Inc. discovered what is believed to be his ship, the *Queen Anne's Revenge*. "We're 95 percent sure it's Blackbeard's ship," says Joanne Powell. Working in cooperation with the N.C. Division of Archives, Intersal set up a nonprofit organization to verify the identity of the ship and recover its artifacts. Several, including a bell, blunderbuss barrel and cannonballs, are already on display in the museum.

There are new styles of pirates today who don't have to risk their lives on the high seas; they can operate from the comfort of their own home or office. Software pirates pull their booty off computer disks, copying programs illegally. Phone pirates use special equipment to steal cellular phone numbers and make illegal calls. Investigators in San Antonio cracked down on video pirates who produced more than 600 counterfeit tapes. Blackbeard would be proud.

S



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Job Announcement

Executive Director The Institute for Southern Studies

The Institute for Southern Studies, a nonprofit center working for progressive change in the South and publisher of *Southern Exposure*, is seeking an executive director to:

- Work with board and staff members to develop and maintain a strategic focus
- Foster the Institute's commitment to addressing race, class, gender, sexual identity, and other issues.
- Fundraising & managing finances
- Assist on Institute research projects

Candidates should be committed to social, economic, and racial justice and have a good grasp of issues affecting Southern grassroots communities in addition to good communication and organizational skills.

Position to start in June 1998. Compensation is \$30-32K with benefits.
Women and people of color are encouraged to apply.

Send cover letter and resume to:

**Pronita Gupta, Executive Director, ISS, P.O. Box 531, Durham, NC 27702-0531
or call (919) 419-8311 ext. 25.**

Photo by Alan Wieder



**DEMONSTRATORS STANDING OUTSIDE OF THE REDNECK SHOP IN LAURENS,
SOUTH CAROLINA. SEE PHOTO ESSAY ON PAGE 39.**



SOUTHERN EXPOSURE
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