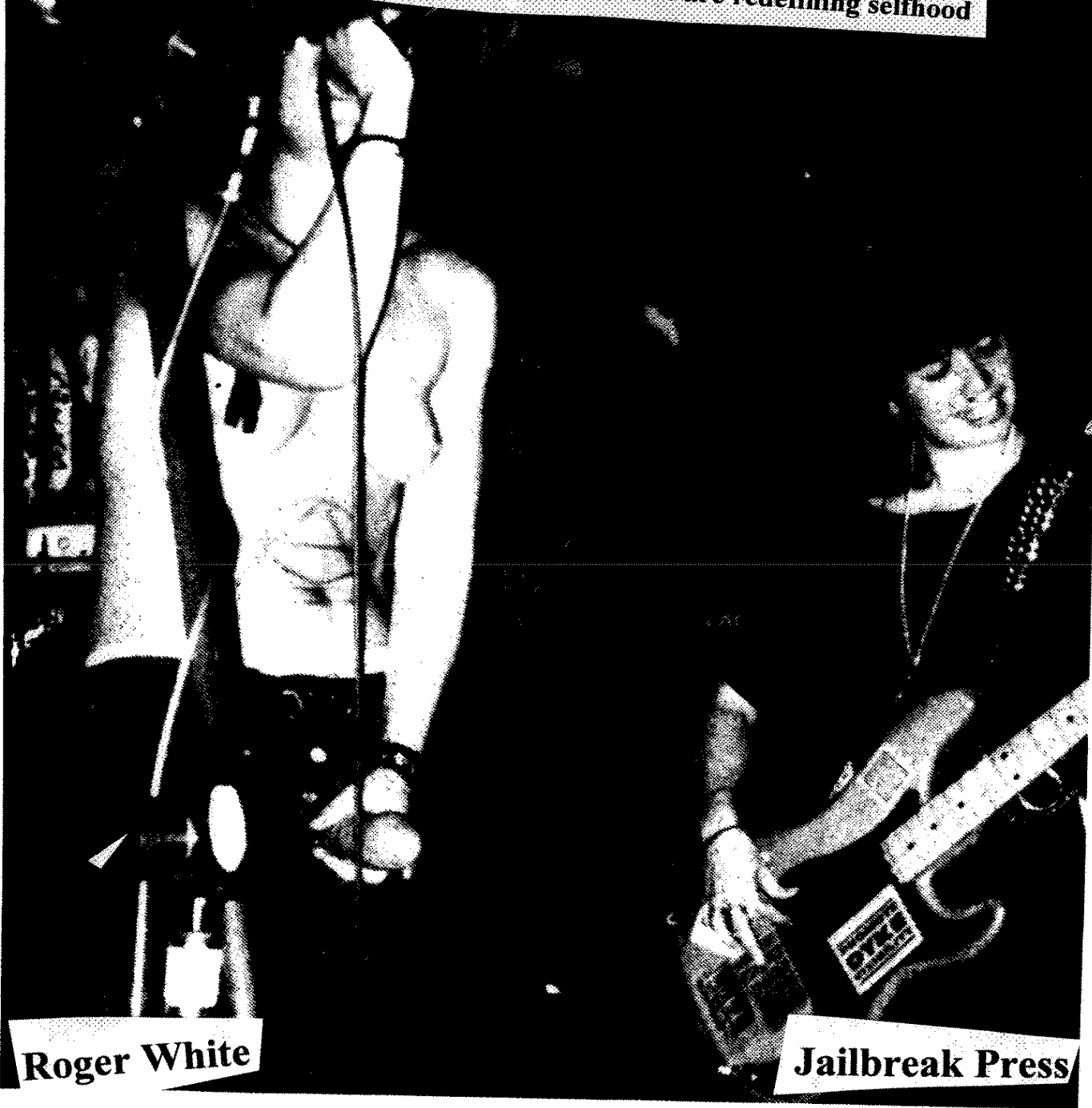


Reclaiming Individualism

How feminists, freaks and radical democrats are redefining selfhood



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This is dedicated to Fela White

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Introduction

It's been said that jazz is the quintessential American music. The jazz ensemble begins together, allows each musician their solo, then ends the way it started-together. In classic be-bop Jazz it's not a question of choosing between community or individualism- one being good, the other bad. It's about realizing that the two are interdependent. American has never lived up to the Jazz ideal. Our job is to make it.

Social conformity stifles the lifeblood of creativity. It takes a political community to create and maintain the social conditions that make individual expression and self-determination possible. It's also true that individuals are the constitutive pieces that make up communities. "The community" is an abstraction. Many social institutions claim to speak for and act on its behalf (government, non-governmental organizations, corporations etc...) If decisions about the common good ignore how those choices are likely to effect real individual people (in addition to families, neighborhoods etc.) in their everyday lives than those institutions become little more than perches from which the powerful pursue their private interests and ideological utopias in the name of the people.

By now individualism has been all but rejected by contemporary liberals and the left. Late- nineteenth century state socialists had a view that rejected the individualist emphasis on birth control, free love, and bodily autonomy. In the following decades Communist regimes repressed homosexuals, intellectuals who were too "westernized" and decadent sub-cultures that, in their

view, were associated with the self-absorbed hedonism of liberal society. The worker exploitation that developed industrial capitalism gave substance to the belief that the demand for individual freedom was most important to only those people who could afford it. Today figures like the communitarian Amitai Etzioni, the establishment liberal Mario Cuomo, and the social justice progressive Michael Lerner all articulate serious center-left critiques of individualism.

Revolutionary industrial socialists and many anarchists in the labor movement particularly viewed feminism as a middle class, and therefore, non-revolutionary concern. While Anarcha-feminists and others in the radical camp, agree with some of the class war critique of individualism they have always fought for bodily freedom as well as economic justice. Anarcha-feminists have always recognized that liberal individualism is property based and the ideal provides not only the main justification for the liberal state, it also lays the basis of class society itself. Under this social order the bourgeoisie exercises the most freedom by virtue of their wealth. As you go down the economic ladder, need becomes more of an impediment to individual self-determination and agency. The very ability to meaningfully exercise one's individual freedom becomes associated with class privilege.

The departure is over the idea that bodily self-determination, domestic and sexual liberation, and equal political participation is somehow subordinate or less pressing than the class struggle. Radical individualists were among the first to support the former while many on

the revolutionary left were opposed to or dismissive of these struggles.

Part one of this book will explore recent arguments, dismissals and sneers that have been made in opposition to the very notion that there can be a *radical* individualism—an individualism that fundamentally challenges social repression *and* capital exploitation. In describing radical individualism I don't use the term radical as a synonym for extreme. It refers to the attempt to examine the root of selfhood and social justice and support the conditions that make both possible.

Part two is a collection of articles and essays on Oakland, California, the U.S. and international affairs.

Individualism: an overview

The next few pages will touch on what I think are the main lines of demarcation within individualism that distinguish someone like Jim Morrison, from someone like Emma Goldman, from someone like Thomas Sowell. All three represent different faces of individualism. But if you think that the left should reject all three then you should read on. If we do we risk losing the gains that have been made over the last two centuries that have challenged and defeated restrictions that have sought to turn women into incubators, and deny all of us control over our bodies.

Questions... How did individualism become the exclusive ideological domain of the American Right? Has it always been? And what is individualism anyway?

For purposes of common definition I'll start with the last question. When I use the term individualism I'm referring to a tradition that developed out of the confluence of the Protestant Reformation which recognized the legitimacy of personal relationships with god, the growth of industrial capitalism with its emphasis on competition and individual initiative, and enlightenment liberalism with its defense of private property, civil liberties and the pursuit of happiness. Individualism also has aristocratic and democratic currents as well. Out of this history came at least three main types of individualisms- Ego, Liberal and Radical.

Yes, too much can be made of these differences. Believing in individualism means at the very least that one thinks

that people should be free and able to make the most critical decisions about their personal lives and not social institutions- the church, the community, the state, corporations, etc. Most people make "decisions", some conscious many not, that make a mockery of the idea that people live their lives by rational free will. But radical individualism does not rest on the presumption that most people can live their life like Spock. It's about recognizing that selfhood is an indispensable component of freedom and believing that people can never be free without experiencing freedom.

Alexis de Tocqueville coined the term individualism back in the 1830's while visiting the U.S. and writing his landmark book *Democracy in America*. He used the term to describe a type of selfishness among the citizenry that put private pursuits and interests ahead of the common good. He wrote

"Each person withdrawn into himself, behaves as though he is a stranger to the destiny of all the others. His children and his good friends constitute for him the whole of the human species. . . . he exists only in himself and for himself alone. And if on these terms there remains in his mind a sense of family, there no longer remains a sense of society."

Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*
Vol.2 p. 104 (1835) Vintage Books New York)

This rejection of individualism by de Tocqueville pointed to the need for the people to be fully engaged in self government for it to work. His critique was psycho- social in nature not philosophical. In other words, he made no

distinctions between different justifications for prioritizing material self interest or bodily autonomy or violent and hedonist expressions of self assertion. His concern was that in the absence of public minded citizens, the civic sphere would erode.

Radicals see agency, or power, as a means towards selfhood. In order for one to achieve autonomy one needs to possess the power to give substance to one's desires and aspirations. The ability to participate equally in collective decision making institutions and freedom from arbitrary power is essential.

For Egoists subjectivity is a means towards chaos- their ultimate horizon. Self- assertion by men of vitality provide critical destabilization of all social orders that require any curtailment of the Will or desire. Nihilism and sadistic violence are often defended by Egoists in the name of individualism.

Liberals view liberty not as an ends in itself but as a vehicle towards a society defined by a social contract based on property rights, self- reliance, civil liberties for citizens, and the free pursuit of economic self interest.

All three traditions claim to be avenues towards freedom but each has imperatives that outweigh their opposition to coercion. For radicals social coercion is not self justifying but can only be justified when someone uses their freedom to violate other peoples right to freedom. Radical individualists insist that individual freedom and

social justice are not only compatible but mutually dependent.

Liberals need social coercion to protect what they believe to be the cornerstone of their liberty- private property. They understand the state as a protector of the natural rights given to each human being by god- chief among them being the "right" to property. Needless to say these "natural rights" only applied to white men. (I said it anyway).

Reason and Nature in Ego Individualism

The core of ego individualism is the idea that human behavior is driven by overwhelming primal instincts- overindulgence, cruelty, sexual conquest, violence, irrational passions, ambition and prejudice. These are the default settings of our nature. Modern conservatives share this Hobbesians view. But unlike conservatives who turn to religion to temper these human appetites, Egoists would like to see these tendencies celebrated for their aesthetics or "creativity." Attempts to suppress or repress them are futile. The state is illegitimate, religion is hypocritical and reason is tyrannical- a notion that gained adherents in post- structuralist circles after the second world war.

The Marquis de Sade made the aristocrat libertine the first and probably the most enduring cultural marker of the Egoist. His books 120 Days in Sodom and Philosophy in the Bedroom were celebrations of desire and cruelty liberated from convention and Christian morality. Although Friedrich Nietzsche had something more daring in mind than self

indulgent hedonism with his exaltation of the superman who was "beyond good and evil", the mentality is consistent and it echoes throughout the history of this type of individualism- strong, vicious, iconic, self important men of the post Christian apocalypse- will do as they please by the law of nature.

In de Sade's *Histoire de Juliette* his character Verneuil asked "How in truth can you require that he who has been endowed by nature with an eminent capacity for crime whether by virtue of the superiority of his powers, and the refinement of his physical organs, or through an education conformable to his station or through his riches...should have to obey the same law that calls all to virtue or to moderation? Is it natural that he whom everything invites to commit evil should be treated exactly as he whom everything drives to behave prudently?" (Marquis de Sade, *Histoire de Juliette*, vol. IV (Holland 1797), p.4)

Nietzsche likewise wrote about the supreme absurdity of shackling strong men with the morality of the weak. Nietzsche inveighs "To demand of strength that it should not express itself as strength, that it should not be a desire to overcome, a desire to throwdown, a desire to become master, a thirst for enemies and resistances and triumphs, is just as absurd as to demand of weakness that it should express itself as strength." (Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals*, (New York: Vintage, 1967) p.45.) For these men, self assertion, cruelty, hedonism, conquest and the "triumph of the Will" are the very life blood of human existence. Their opposites- peace, equality, mutual accommodation- are understood by the

egoists as a decadent renunciation of life by the weak. One affirms life by killing, violating, celebrating debauchery, and making a pig of oneself.

Mad Max

While the German anarchist Max Stirner wasn't an irrationalist who found stimulation from the pain of others, his antinomianism and rejection of any idea of social accountability makes him an accomplice to those who would like to see the liberation of the supermen in all its blood and gore.

Stirner helped to give individualism its anti-human reputation. "We do not aspire to communal life but to a life apart." "The people's good fortune is my misfortune!" Lastly, the bedrock philosophy of today's free market fundamentalist, "If it is right for me, it is right. It is possible that it is wrong for others: let them take care of themselves!" (Daniel Guerin, *Anarchism* (Monthly Review Press: New York 1970) p. 28-29) I don't think that last one would poll well with suburban soccer moms.

As anarchist as Stirner was, he played a distinctly political role in the development of ego individualism. While de Sade wrote about the politics of the bedroom, Steiner wrote about the kind of society that might be more hospitable to the domination of a "new barbarian race," a term Nietzsche would go on to use in describing his over-man tribe. In Max Stirner's most famous work "The Ego and His Own" he talks about a "Union of Egoists" that would share in common an iron Will and the desire to be a "unique I." Anyone who's spent anytime in groups of type A,

narcissuses knows full well how long a Union of Egoist club would last. This is Steiner's stab at creating a civil society out of randomly associated supermen and all we have to do is look at the fate of most rock super groups to project the success rate of these "unions."

The FAQ on Anarchism writes [Steiner's] "union is a voluntary structure formed by its members in their own immediate interests. This is a union of self confessed selfish people, which they leave as soon as their interests are not being delivered." Steiner's attempt to provide the socio-political setting most conducive to the self assertive ego lacks any cohesion. Contrary to the Egoist goal, this wouldn't make their ideal society chaotic. It would simply make it more vulnerable to powerful authoritarians who believe that those who own the country should, in words of John Jay, run the country.

Unfortunately there are many elites with concentrations of power and wealth and they often think alike on real important issues. We should assume that they will be able to put aside their differences on things like abortion and affirmative action in order to maintain their power. Intellectuals and activists in the working and middle classes will never find this commonality of interest because we're too often divided by ideology- the poetry of domination.

The two World Wars laid bare the existential dangers of combining irrationalism and unaccountable rule with totalitarian ambitions. It didn't take long after those historical convulsions from Egoism to reappear- this time

as farce. Anton LeVey, head of the Church of Satan kept the tradition alive years later with his book *The Satanic Bible* with an attack on Christianity, and praise for self assertion regardless of who gets hurt.

Because of the overlapping nature of the three main individualist ideals, Egoist figures and gestures are often considered leftist by the mainstream media and casual observers. Radicals are sometimes said to have a vision of social reality that ignores the dark side of human behavior. Our Rousseauian belief in the innate goodness of human nature is a form of denial. Furthermore, our faith in reason is a callow, vain naiveté.

Reason, according to Nietzsche, was an inadequate basis to sustain culture. For Foucault its "tyranny" was yet another discourse of domination- an idea developed by Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno in their book *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. At the very least, so the argument goes, the ego individualists knows what "liberation" really means and are unsentimental enough to face its ugly side even as they accept its inevitabilities and celebrate its cultural audacity.

There's no need to believe in the inherent goodness of humans or our perfectibility through the application of instrumental reason to support the idea that people and societies can, through the aid of reason, develop in a progressive direction if we're free to develop our natural creativity, inventiveness and interests. This is the essence of "self expression," that much maligned concept of creative freedom from the 1960's. Kant had a point. Reason

is a pre-requisite for freedom. Certainly not the only one, but one nonetheless.

Humans may not be innately good but we do share a moral sensibility that's probably biological in its origin. The more we find out about the psychology of human behavior the less plausible the notion of a human "blank slate" at birth becomes.

Since the 60's a disparate group of post-modern academics, primitivist and anarchist intellectuals have played with the irrationalist fire that ego individualists demanded be liberated. They're mainly writers and speakers preferring intellectual work to organizing and direct action. The exception is Ted Kaczynski who a few anarchist intellectuals embraced *after* his decades long random murder of human "symbols" of technological society came to light.

Kaczynski

Ego individualists who go under the label "post left" have attempted to realign anarchism away from its traditional leftist underpinnings in the name of this alleged hard headed realism about human nature and power. These anarchists have their historical arguments, their publications. But their hero is the Harvard graduate and serial murderer Ted Kaczynski.

Ted Kaczynski was an obscure math professor at UC Berkeley in the late 60's. He quit in 1969 and embarked on his Zarathustraian mountain meditation. Instead of coming back down after a few years of solitude to share his new found wisdom with the rest of the rabble, he decided to start

killing high tech businessmen with mail bombs. In all he killed three people and wounded 23. In 1995 he was arrested in a remote cabin just outside of Lincoln, Nebraska.

The manifesto (Industrial Society and its Future) that Kaczynski blackmailed the New York Times and the Washington Post into printing on the threat of further mail bombings, is mainly an attack on industrial- technological society and the left. For Kaczynski people on the left are collectivists. Collectivism is bad because it requires industrialization and technology. Industrialization and technology are bad because they have

"greatly increased the life-expectancy of those of us who live in "advanced" countries; they have destabilized society; have made life unfulfilling, have subjected human beings to indignities, have led to widespread psychological suffering (in the Third World to physical suffering as well) and have inflicted severe damage on the natural world. The continued development of technology will worsen the situation." http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Industrial_Society_and_Its_Future

Our concern here isn't so much with Kaczynski's critique of technological society. Some of what he says about it is actually true. It's his attempt to somehow link what he calls "leftism" to technology's alleged reign of terror that's unconvincing.

"Leftism is collectivist; it seeks to bind together the entire world (both nature and the

human race) into a unified whole. But this implies management of nature and of human life by organized society, and it requires advanced technology. You can't have a united world without rapid transportation and communication, you can't make all people love one another without sophisticated psychological techniques, you can't have a "planned society" without the necessary technological base. Above all, leftism is driven by the need for power, and the leftist seeks power on a collective basis, through identification with a mass movement or an organization. Leftism is unlikely ever to give up technology, because technology is too valuable a source of collective power." (Ibid.)

"Leftism" is not the handmaiden of mass transit or communications- industrial corporatists and government engineers were the financiers and planners who funded these systems that were developed in the 19th and 20th century. And the idea that leftists are uniquely "driven by the need for power" is absurd. Blaming one ideology for what is really an ever present historical human tendency is the mark of someone who has let their hatred of certain people and ideas blind their analysis.

Kaczynski imagines that there are two distinct spheres of power- collective and individual. Individual power - autonomy- is the power to initiate action in order to reach a goal. But collective power is the attempt by weak individuals (leftists) to control others through the power of large organizations because they can't do so on their

own. The idea that people might come together in groups to democratically coordinate the life of a community or a project is seen as just another attempt by leftists to control others. While Kaczynski does allow for small groups he never defines what "small" really means and in what context.

Out of all of the main Ego individualist thinkers Kaczynski is closest to Max Steiner in his views. Like Steiner, Kaczynski is a rationalist, but he apparently doesn't much like the offerings that instrumental reason has produced over the last 200 years. Which begs the question. If the greatest achievements of modern science- industrialism and information technology, must be destroyed in order to save the world what good is rationalism? Kaczynski claims that

"the leftist hates science and rationality because they classify certain beliefs as true (i.e., successful, superior) and other beliefs as false (i.e., failed, inferior). The leftist's feelings of inferiority run so deep that he cannot tolerate any classification of some things as successful or superior and other things as failed or inferior." (Ibid.)

While there have been some critiques of science and industrialism from feminist, post- modern, and radical environmentalist quarters, there is no wholesale rejection of "science and rationality" on the left. If anything, the secularist and rationalist left has grown stronger since 9-11. What the leftist cannot tolerate is the construction and maintenance of vast social hierarchies and economic

inequities based on these "classifications." Many, still think that hierarchies that permit some in society to conspicuously flaunt their capacity to waste and destroy with no accountability while others are in desperate need of the very basics of survival, are unjust and should be fought against and dismantled. It's those who make a fetish out of being superior who are simply over compensating for their own deep seated feelings of inferiority.

Kaczynski is certainly not the only one who doubts the possibility of having economic democracy at the workplace, in the community and in society at large *and* having bodily autonomy and freedom. But his wholesale dismissal of "leftism" for its totalitarian collectivism indicates that he's not familiar with or doesn't take seriously any of the intellectual history of this debate among people on the left. This essay is an attempt to try to re-familiarize people with the radical position that certainly considered itself leftist and individualist.

Despite (or maybe because) his carnage Kaczynski poses important questions for those who consider themselves individualists. He proposes an intoxicating cocktail of individual separatism, symbolic violence and primitivism as a new direction for society. It's attractive to many young anarchists who are familiar with isolation because it provides a philosophical justification for remaining isolated. For them these ideas are self affirming. But unlike the Transcendentalists who moved beyond self meditation to resistance and political engagement, the ego individualist insists on remaining a "Lizard King" till death. A combination of contempt for the masses, fear, and

privilege render them unable to engage, reciprocate, argue or struggle with anyone but themselves and small like-minded intellectual clicks.

Ultimately, individualism can't merely be a private journey. Selfhood is about having the freedom and agency to develop your creativity so that its fruits can be shared with the rest of the world.

No Justice- Just Me

Egoism negates any concept of justice. While classical liberals assert that only individuals have a claim to justice and radicals believe that systemic denials of justice based on entrenched social hierarchies demand systemic analysis and responses, ego individualists reject the very notion of justice itself. Thrasymachus, the ancient Greek sophist, at the very least, thought that the rule of the elite was just by virtue of the fact that they were the most powerful. Ego-individualists don't believe in such a thing as "justice"- social or individual. For them it's an impossible project.

This is a call for an end to all society (not just political)that would ultimately (and maybe right away) make way for the further consolidation of corporate feudalism where social order is kept by private pigs and mercenary armies owned by insurance companies and wealthy individuals. I suppose supermen and rich, over sexed libertines don't have to worry about what this would really mean for freedom but maybe the rest of us should take a closer look.

Aristocracy	Enlightenment	Protestant Reformation	
Ego	Liberal	Radical	
Libertine	Classical	Romantic	Rationalist
de Sade	Locke	Rousseau	Kant
		Wollstonecraft/ Godwin	
	Smith, Voltaire,	Transcendentalists	
	Paine, Mill,	Thoreau, Fuller	
	Von Humboldt,	Whitman, Emerson	
	Jefferson	Democratic	
		Truth, Douglass	
		Garrison, Walker	
	Anarcho-Individualism		
	Heywood, Harmen, Warren,		
	McElroy		
Stirner	Spenser		
Nietzsche		Anarcha- feminism	
	Corporate	Goldman, Kornegger,	
	Hoover, Carnegie,	Presley, de Cleyre	
	Mellon, Coolidge		
		Sex liberation	
		Marcuse, O'Brown, Comfort	
Anton LeVey	Market	Willis, Echols	
	Austrian School,		
	Libertarian- Rand,		
	Sowell, Rothbard		
	Nozick	Counterculture	
		Hendrix, Leary,	
		Beatniks, Yippies	
Post Modern	Neo-liberal	Democratic	Situationist
Foucault	Thomas Friedman	Hayden	Guy deBard
Hayden, Bond,		Heron, Bond	
Camile Paglia		Hamer	
Primitivists		Punk	
Ted Kaczynski, John Zerzan		Dead Kennedys, Crass, Riot Girrl	

The Liberals: self- ownership and property rights

Any fair treatment of liberal individualism would take volumes. I don't plan to be fair. The volumes would presumably include the cross pollination between liberal and radical ideas about the individuals relationship to society, the state, and their communities. That, in any case, will be my focus.

So what distinguishes the liberal and radical traditions? First, I would say, is the critique by radicals of property and economic based definitions of liberty that liberals hold. This most often means a rejection of private property accumulation and capitalism in favor of a more collectivist approach to wealth distribution. Secondly, liberal individualists have been much more likely to interpret the harm principal in ways that support their pacifist tendencies while radicals are more willing to conditionally support the use of force in order to defend the powerless from the injustices of the powerful. Lastly, the liberal support for civil liberties has never meant support for bodily self determination. Radicals have consistently demanded that human beings not only be free to speak, meet, and worship as we please, but that we also be free to control our own bodies- something liberals have always balked at with the exception of a handful of radical liberals in the classical era.

It was an achievement of the classical liberals (out of which some of the greatest defenders of freedom and justice have come- Thomas Paine, Voltaire, Frederick Douglass) to demand that individual liberty, equal political

participation and the pursuit of happiness be the right of all the people not just the ones privileged by property, race, education, or gender. A number of classical liberals never lived up to the soaring universalist rhetoric. Thomas Jefferson comes to mind. But this opening of the social sphere laid the ground for many of the civil liberties and privacy rights that we take for granted today.

As the 18th century drew to a close the liberal revolutions of the era gave rise to a new emphasis on individual liberty that sometimes accompanied and sometimes was hostile to the property based theories of freedom that came from John Locke. Thinkers like the proto anarchist William Godwin and classical radical liberals like Wilhelm Von Humboldt set individualism on a divergent path from Locke's property based model.

Godwin wrote "the period that must put an end to the system of coercion and punishment is intimately connected with the circumstance of property's being placed upon an equitable basis." (<http://www.historyguide.org/thesis/chapter4.html>) Godwin clearly linked social justice with the eradication of private property and claimed that the system of voluntary philanthropy from the rich to those without property is "a system of charity rather than a system of justice." It's also important to remember that Godwin made a distinction between personal property- that which the owner uses on a regular basis, and "accumulated property"- what today we might call investment property. These expressions were not the old property based libertarian ideals of the Glorious Revolution. They were the stirrings of an autonomist conception of individual freedom that was

rooted in bodily self- determination. Von Humboldt's sentiments in his 1791 writings gave voice to this shift. "In no case, then should prohibitive laws be enacted, when the advantage refers solely to the proprietor. Again, it is not enough to justify such restrictions, that an action should imply damage to another person; it must, at the same time, encroach upon his rights." (Wilhelm Von Humboldt, *The Sphere and Duties of Government* (Thoemmes Press 1996) p.121.)

John Stuart Mill popularized this conception (later to be referred to as the harm principal) with his 1854 classic *On Liberty*. "The sole end for which mankind are warranted, individually or collectively, in interfering with the liberty of action of any of their number is self-protection...His own good, either physical or moral is not a sufficient warrant." (John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* (Appleton- Century Crofts New York 1947) p.9)

This "one very simply principal" has been called simplistic, naïve, unworkable. But it has provided the most durable ideal of individualism during times of great repression. Both liberals and radicals have used the harm principal to defend choice, civil liberties self autonomy, and privacy and to argue that the state and its many agents have no legitimate authority to "save" us from ourselves. The old feminist slogan "keep your laws off my body" is an expression of this axiom.

Many liberal individualist were pacifists (a good number were American anarchists before the civil war as well). This made them unwilling to support the use of state force

to stop unjust oppression and slavery. Although the Transcendentalists, like the liberals, believed in self-ownership as the basis for individual freedom, they rejected the anarchist and Christian pacifist placement of non-violence above the abolition of slavery. Ralph Waldo Emerson and Walt Whitman were supporters of the North during the civil war and both were sober enough to realize that after 244 years of chattel slavery on American soil the abolition movement was at a crossroads and failure to support the Union against the White Supremacist Confederacy would have meant betrayal to millions of Black slaves who, had the Union lost, would have remained in bondage indefinitely.

The same argument could be made in favor of the use of state force to defeat the Nazis during WWII. We may dislike or be against the use of state force. But there are historical circumstances where state force has provided the critical difference between the triumph of a liberal white supremacist order in the West and a fascist one. The very fact that I'm able to communicate these ideas to thousands without being censored or incarcerated is an indication of the difference between the two.

Political writer Bernard E Brown wrote of Whitman that he "applauded Lincoln's call to arms" at the start of the civil war and although he wished to "restrict the government" and "venerated the individual," he "had little patience for retreat into the primitive or the renunciation of politics. He was rather a champion of progress..." (Bernard E Brown, Great American Political Thinkers (Avon Books: New York 1983) p. 131) The Transcendentalists not

only recognized that justice was a prerequisite for individual freedom they also understood that force sometimes had to be used to achieve and maintain justice.

The Union victory in the civil war was a victory for the abolition movement and inspired the rise of the Radical Republican's in congress, the women's movement and progressive era demands for economic justice in the factory system. But it also came at the price of hundreds of thousands dead and a horrible philosophical dilemma for individualists.

Should people who seek individual liberty in order to be unfettered in the usage of their property, even if it's other humans, be "free" to do so? When the non-coercion ideal is violated should radical individualists limit themselves to the philosophical equivalent of holding the coat of those being victimized?

I think not. You forfeit your right to freedom in those moments when you're using your freedom to violate someone else's right to freedom. Communities, anarchist or otherwise, should not be obligated to allow rapists, and slaveholders to oppress with impunity under the guise of non-coercion. This understanding is in line with the harm principal. The only justification for coercion is to interrupt direct harm being inflicted on someone. In those cases defending social justice is an expression of the priority we place on non-coercion. Not a violation of it.

Before the civil war liberal free market ideas were not yet indelibly connected to concepts like exploitation on the

left. Adam Smith certainly wasn't a European conservative. But after the U.S. civil war, the philosophy of Social Darwinism promulgated by Herbert Spenser was flourishing. Property based liberalism rooted in concepts of self-ownership, happiness and property as a natural right had transformed into a system that promoted corporate domination over markets and workers as well as the cultural sphere- where the real long term damage was done. A new and powerful industrial class began to appropriate liberal individualist arguments to justify some of the worse crimes of exploitation in the factory system. Their opposition to unions, socialism, and other collectivist ideas increasingly became articulated as a defense of *Homo Economicus* and his right to contract, own property, invest and consume free from any social accountability.

Spenser was a positivist who believed that applying scientific methods to human problems would yield the same amount of progress in society as it had in our understanding of the physical world. He thought "the poverty of the incapable, the distresses that come upon the imprudent, the starvation of the idle, and those shoulderings aside of the weak by the strong, which leave so many "in shallows and in miseries," are the decrees of a large, far-seeing benevolence." Herbert Spenser, *Social Statics Pt. III, Ch. 25, Poor-Laws 1851*)

For Spenser hierarchies in human societies were simply a reflection of natural selection and that helping the poor and destitute is bad because you're intervening in nature's own pruning process. This was the bold new attitude of *laissez faire*. In American it lasted for about 80 years from the mid 1800's to the Great Depression. It was marked

by market crashes about every 20 years- 1857, 1873, 1893, 1906, 1929. Working people were crushed under the new factory system while GDP grew, and some incomes rose. Meanwhile, America continued its wars of imperialism abroad as attacks against Blacks, Native and Chinese Americans and European immigrants grew more vicious at home. But taxes were low. A libertarian paradise.

Radical individualism underwent an important resurgence in the aftermath of the civil war. As liberal individualism progressively became associated with the Social Darwinists, radical and anarcho- individualists became more outspoken about free love, universal suffrage, birth control, spiritualism, dress reform and other issues related to bodily and domestic freedom. Spenser, incidentally, was a proponent of sex varietism.

Kant, the Transcendentalists and Radical Alternatives

The German philosopher Immanuel Kant, did not view property rights as a natural right and did not believe it either a synonym for freedom or a prerequisite for it. Nonetheless Kant talks about individual freedom and makes it a condition of morality. People who act on compulsion are amoral beings simply because they are motivated by fear not the desire to follow a moral code. They have no agency. Kant writes we "think of ourselves as subject to moral laws because we have attributed to ourselves freedom of the will." This is a freedom of conscience, and of person, not of ownership.

The philosopher Marcus Verhaegh explains "Kant does not posit self-ownership. In the Metaphysics of Morals Kant claims that each individual has only one innate right, that of freedom. It is because of this right that one's person may not be arbitrarily coerced, and not because of a right to property that covers self-ownership..." (www.mises.org/journals/jls/18_3_2.pdf) Kant himself wrote "Freedom (independence from being constrained by another's choice), insofar as it can coexist with the freedom of every other in accordance with a universal law, is the only original right belonging to every man by virtue of his humanity." (Immanuel Kant, Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals Hackett Publishing Co. (1981) Chap. 6 p.237)

Ralph Waldo Emerson first used the term Transcendentalism to describe the New England literary and philosophical movement that developed in the early 1800's out of Immanuel Kant's rejection of Locke's empiricism. Kant articulated an important epistemological condition of humans. Our knowledge of what is is always mediated by our perception of what is. Our relationship to that reality is defined by the means by which we perceive it. Reason gives us access to truth. But because our access to reality is always subjective so to are the moral judgments that are produced by our limited access to reality. Having agency makes one morally responsible for one's actions or one's failure to act. Living in accord with that truth has external consequences- as Henry Thoreau experienced in his imprisonment for his tax protests against the Mexican War.

The author of the famous book In Defense of Anarchism, Robert Paul Wolff wrote "Kant argued moral autonomy is a

submission to laws that one has made for one's self. The autonomous man, insofar as he is autonomous, is not subject to the will of another. The autonomous... man may do what another tells him, but not because he has been told to do it...By accepting as final the commands of others, he forfeits his autonomy." (Willard Gaylin, Bruce Jennings, The Perversion of Autonomy, (Free Press 1996) p.31)

If we can't rely on our empirical experience of the world to make judgments about what we know and don't or can't know, than any claim to know unmediated or absolute truth must be rejected. The only truth that one has an unmediated relationship to is ones own. This truth transcends our empirical encounters with the world and is nourished by our intuition, ideas and our use of reason.

In the U.S. Emerson took Kant's insights to develop a romantic individualism that sought to challenge Lockean empiricism.

"It is well known to most of my audience, that the Idealism of the present day acquired the name of Transcendental, from the use of that term by Immanuel Kant, of Königsberg, who replied to the skeptical philosophy of Locke, which insisted that there was nothing in the intellect which was not previously in the experience of the senses, by showing that there was a very important class of ideas, or imperative forms, which did not come by experience, but through which experience was acquired; that these were intuitions of the mind

itself; and he denominated the
Transcendental forms. The extraordinary
profoundness and precision of that man's
thinking have given vogue to his
nomenclature, in Europe and America, to
that extent, that whatever belongs to the
class of intuitive thought, is popularly
called at the present day *Transcendental*."
(Ralph Emerson, *The Transcendentalists*, Self
Published Essay 1842)

The Transcendentalists took their name and philosophy from Kant but their sensibilities came from romantic radical individualists like Rousseau and Shelly. Walt Whitman embodied the romantic and naturalist sentiments along with a clear eyed view of power and justice. His influence on radical individualism stretched from the late 1800's to the Beat movement of the 1950's. Allen Ginsburg often cited Walt Whitman as a source of inspiration.

The Beat Movement, a loosely associated click of wanderers and poets, turned its embrace of eastern spirituality, marijuana and free love, into a full blown counter- culture in about 15 years. This golden age of radical individualism is embodied by voices like Bob Dylan and the Yippies. But more than anybody else, Jimi Hendricks represented the "freak"- a central cultural archetype for radical individualists. His clothes, his hair, his music were brilliant and unique. He wasn't overtly "political" in most of his songs but they had messages in them. In his song If 6 was 9 he explained "I'm the one that has to die when its

time for me to go. So let me live my life the way I want to."

While Hendricks, and Poets like Gil Scott Heron gave voice to black cultural resistance and hippies revived the romantic individualism of the transcendentalists over 100 years earlier, free market academics were busy completing the intellectual infrastructure of the modern conservative movement. Fredrick Hayek published his classic *Road to Serfdom* in the 1955. In it he argued for a different type of individualism. For Hayek the individual was in a constant struggle against state bureaucrats who saw taxation, regulation, and central planning as a way to test their various social theories and utopian ideologies out on the great masses. The godfather of this market individualism was Ludwig Von Mises, a laissez faire economist born in 1881's who inspired Hayek, Milton Friedman and others in the so called "Chicago School" of the early-mid 20th century.

The Chicago School at the University of Chicago was the theoretical complement to a three headed liberal individualist Frankenstein that also included the corporate monopolists of the gilded age like Mellon and Carnegie (Carnegie funded the school's economics and business departments) and the laissez faire Republican politicians of the 1920's who led the nation into the worse depression in the country's history.

The Chicago School promoted the idea that- humans are self-interested, profit maximizing, rational actors that respond predictably to market stimuli in the aggregate. Their

support for Neo-Classical Price Theory put them at odds with the prevailing Keynesian orthodoxies around labor and the wisdom of state intervention in markets. Their belief in the private manipulation of the money supply (central banks) reveals their own fondness for market intervention on the behalf of the investor class. Nonetheless the Chicago School lent academic creditability to opposition to minimum wages, wage and price controls, and social welfare programs while promoting tax cuts, less regulations, and limited government. This platform represented millions of Reagan Republicans in the conservative movement.

Herbert Hoover's arguments for government non-action after the 1929 crash relied heavily on liberal market dogma that counterpoised American individualism against the specter of European collectivism. For Hoover our choice was between

"the American system of rugged individualism and a European philosophy of diametrically opposed doctrines, doctrines of paternalism socialism. The acceptance of these ideas would have meant the destruction of self-government through centralization... [and] the undermining of the individual initiative and enterprise through which our people have grown unparalleled greatness. (Herbert Hoover, "Rugged Individualism Speech" October 22, 1928)

<http://www.pinzler.com/ushistory/ruggedsupp.html>

25 years after the '29 crash liberal individualism returned in a much more effective form. The bosses spent the better

part of the 1930's and 1940's smashing unions and killing organizers. The Republicans passed Taft - Hartley in 1954 making it harder for workers to unionize. During these offensives against workers the advertising and marketing industries were finding new and improved ways to manipulate people's consumption habits through TV ads. Production increasingly was dependent on the ability of corporations to manufacture wants and blur the distinction between need and desire. By the 1960's liberal individualism had been almost completely transformed from a political creed to a market one. The consumer and her market choices were the only meaningful expression of individualism in an age where our possessions defined who we were- our uniqueness was communicated by what car we drove, what brand of cigarettes we smoked, what kind of jeans we wore. It was this type of consumer individualism that underscored Milton Friedman's later popular works.

Radical democrats

One of the most historically significant radical individualist movements in the U.S. came with the participatory democracy struggles in the 1800's and 1900's. Leaders and thinkers like Sojourner Truth, Fredrick Douglas, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Fanny Lou Hamer, Tom Hayden and Julian Bond wrote, organized and fought for the idea that everyone had a right to be heard and to be a part of the political community. This recalled Rousseau's pre modern understanding of freedom as the right to participate fully in self government as an equal citizen.

Rousseau was one of the first major thinkers to combine participatory democracy- for him a prerequisite to the very legitimacy of the state, with the rejection of private property. For him property was the author of inequality and social inequality made true democracy impossible. Liberal democracy- the attempt to reconcile private property and a more limited version of democracy characterized by a number of roadblocks and breaks to the popular will- went on to eclipse Rousseau's more radical vision. This eclipse is responsible for the economic emphasis that classical liberals put on liberty.

In America, the liberal democratic tradition prevailed in the form of a constitution republic. It began with property ownership as a prerequisite for voting rights. Under this system citizens voted for representatives who were free to legislate within the bounds of a charter that protected the life and property of the citizens. In the late 1700's property tests for voting rights started to fall. But race and gender restrictions to the rights of citizenship remained.

Sojourner Truth was such a central figure in the history of radical democratic individualism because her struggle for abolition, equality for women and universal suffrage put her at the nexus of all the major struggles for emancipation in ante-bellum America. Not only was she an abolitionist she as born a slave and knew first hand the pain of chattel bondage. Not only was she in favor of women's rights she was a woman and knew first hand the subjugation of patriarchal marriage and female repression. But she did more than stand at the vortex of

these struggles; she helped to lead them as well. Her leadership valued participatory democracy over merely the right to vote and justice over a comfortable non-coercion that kept in place prevailing hierarchies.

Truth and Democracy

Truth was born sometime in 1797 on the Hardener plantation in Swartekill, New York. She escaped in 1824 with her infant daughter and traveled from place to place before she changed her name from Isabella Baumfree to Sojourner Truth and began giving speeches all across the county on the evils of slavery and female oppression. In 1844 she became a part of the Northampton Association of Education and Industry in Massachusetts. The community was founded on the principals of abolitionism, women's rights, religious tolerance and pacifism.

In 1851 Truth gave her most famous speech- "Ain't I a Women?" In it she articulated what would go on to be an important theme in radical and Marxist feminist theory- the idea that woman should enjoy the same freedom that men have, in part, because women have the same capacity to produce and be self sufficient.

"That man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or over mud-puddles, or gives me any best place! And ain't I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm! I have ploughed and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And ain't I a woman? I

could work as much and eat as much as a man -
when I could get it - and bear the lash as well!
And ain't I a woman? I have borne thirteen
children, and seen most all sold off to slavery,
and when I cried out with my mother's grief, none
but Jesus heard me! And ain't I a woman?
Then they talk about this thing in the head;
what's this they call it? [member of audience
whispers, "intellect"] That's it, honey. What's
that got to do with women's rights or negroes'
rights? If my cup won't hold but a pint, and
yours holds a quart, wouldn't you be mean not to
let me have my little half measure full?"

http://afroamhistory.about.com/library/blsojourner_truth_womanspeech.htm

Truth was among the first to publicly question the dependence/ submission basis upon which the subjugation of women rested and provided working class female socialists with an early vocabulary to communicate the demand for economic rights. Its easy to say that Truth's demand for social justice or equal political and economic rights for blacks and women was fundamentally liberal in its aspirations. But if we view social justice and participatory democracy as perquisites to selfhood instead of accommodations to property based notions of liberty, then Truth's work can be seen as the root of radical individualism rather than some middle class exercise in self indulgence. Truth never referred to herself as an individualist. I won't either. But her analysis of oppression provided radical individualists with a fuller understanding of democracy.

Truth risked her life daring to speak on political matters.

Frances D. Gage, a first wave feminist in attendance at the Akron Women's Rights Convention of May 1851 wrote

"There were very few women in those days who dared to 'speak in meeting'... Some of the tender-skinned friends were on the point of losing dignity, and the atmosphere betokened a storm. When, slowly from her seat in the corner rose Sojourner Truth who till now had scarcely lifted her head. "Don't let her speak!" gasped half a dozen in my ear. She moved slowly to the front, laid her bonnet at her feet, and turned her great speaking eyes to me... She spoke in deep tones which, though not loud, reached every ear in the house..."

http://womenshistory.about.com/od/sojournertruth/a/aint_i_a_woman.htm

Truth was regularly threatened with death at her speaking engagements. But she continued to defy the bigots with her speeches on the evils of prisons and capital punishment along with her demands for liberation for blacks and women. She recognized that democracy was not just about voting, it was about standing up and speaking out no matter the consequences.

Democratic individualism from its inception was primarily concerned with matching the soaring rhetoric of classical liberalism with the reality of race based bondage and female subjugation. The speeches of Douglass were nothing if not condemnations of white liberal individualist hypocrisy.

"What, to the American slave, is your 4th of July? A day that reveals to him, more than all other days in the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim. To him, your celebration is a sham, your boasted liberty, an unholy license...Your sermons and thanksgivings, with all your religious parade and solemnity, are to him, mere bombast, fraud, deception, impiety, and hypocrisy—a thin veil to cover up crimes which would disgrace a nation of savages." <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4h2927.html>

100 years later, James Baldwin often echoed Douglass in his writing and speaking on American hypocrisy and the duplicity of white liberals in their refusal to take black dignity seriously.

Many revolutionary nationalists also rejected individualism wholesale. Amiri Baraka critiqued Ralph Ellison for his "petty bourgeois individualism." This view conflates the selfish careerism of a few Black social climbers with the legitimate commitment to personal freedom that Blacks and other peoples of color have fought for over the centuries. It also ignores the role indigenous, immigrant and communities of color have played in contributing to the practice and ideas of individualism. Colored individualists have led struggles in global south communities for bodily self determination, the right to vote and racial justice. This had an enormous impact on our social landscape.

That tradition in communities of color is still vibrant today although in many of our communities religious and

political institutions conspire to shove their moral dogmas down the throats of the rest of us. In Mexico the on going struggle over abortion rights is an example. In April of 2007 Mexico City passed a law that would have legalized first tri- semester abortion. Organizations like the Information Group on Reproductive Choice (GIRE) and Mexico City Planned Parenthood along with the support of progressives in the city legislature and Mayor Marcelo Ebrard pushed through the law in the face of wide spread protest all over the heavily Catholic country. Marta Lamas, the head of GIRE, said in response to the backlash "We are indignant, yes, but not alarmed...We know that we have reason on our side..." (Braine, Theresa, Mexico City's Abortion Law Hits Stop and Go Signs; LifeSite News 7/19/2007)

Opposition forces immediately coalesced and challenged the law. The National Human Rights Commission got together with the Federal Attorney General and went to the Country's Supreme Court to overturn the new law. Federal law makers, and groups like the Collage of Catholic Lawyers also started a campaign to take the case to the Inter-American Court of Human Rights claiming that it wanted to "show the world the lack of democracy in Mexico City." Ibid. Of course, whenever the religious right, whether in the States or in Mexico, has a majority behind them on an issue they demand democracy over individual freedom. When they can't muster majority support for their authoritarian social agenda they flip the argument and talk about individual rights and the limits of popular will.

As of October of 2007 the Mexico Supreme Court asked Justice Sergio Salvador Aguirre, a conservative, the draft

an opinion in the case. Observers are expecting the Court to overturn the Mexico City law liberalizing abortion on the grounds that only the Federal Government is competent to rule in such matters. The larger fear is that a ruling like this could put in jeopardy previous laws passed in Mexico City recognizing same sex civil unions and could effectively block planned legislation allowing euthanasia. Nonetheless, libertarian progressive activists and parties like the Institutional Revolutionary Party, and the Democratic Revolution Party in the Capital continue to push the envelope on bodily autonomy in the face of great odds.

Radicals for the right to vote

A sure sign of liberal, wide-eyed Naïveté is voting. We've been told by class war anarchists- that voting helps to legitimate the state when in fact there is no justification for its existence. Even if there were, most anarchists argue, democratic rule is still rule. Meanwhile, Communists wait for a vanguard leader who can carry out the "dictatorship of the proletariat."

Even among anarchists this view has been questioned. Early anarchists like Proudhon and Kropotkin viewed General Assemblies as a necessary part of the administration of society. In fact, Proudhon went on to serve in the French Assembly.

Kropotkin believed that the revolution took place in everyday life and called for on-going debate on the administration of social tasks. "The 'permanence' of the general assemblies of the sections -- that is, the possibility of calling the general assembly whenever it was wanted by the members of the section and of discussing

everything in the general assembly. . . will educate every citizen politically. . . The section in permanence -- the forum always open -- is the only way.. to assure an honest.. administration." http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/talks/freedom_mar01.html

During the Spanish Civil War anarchists joined the popular front government not in order to rule over others, but in order to give voice to the movement that they were delegated to represent. Their participation in the Spanish government did not make them rulers. Rulers control both the making and enforcement of laws. By contrast, the Spanish popular front government was a coalition of all the forces in the country that didn't want the fascists to take power. The four anarchists that were part of the council acted with integrity under a wartime situation. Despite what contemporary armchair revolutionaries have to say about how the Spanish Anarchists "sold out" the people, it's hard to launch a revolution in the middle of a civil war.

The term self- rule is a contradiction in terms. Anarchy means no rule. Rule is when one person controls, manages, and manipulates someone else. They themselves are not subject to the same laws they decree for their subjects. They make the laws and enforce the laws.

In a direct democracy people make decisions about how their resources will be spent and how their collective responsibilities will be executed in a local setting. In larger democratic communities delegates are used to stand in for the people that they were elected to represent. In this system decision makers are temporary, subject to the same law as everyone else and obligated to represent the

views of those that brought them to the dance. This is not political rule because there is no political class with privileges and unaccountable power over others. Delegates are temporary stewards of the people's trust. This is participatory democracy and it has been successfully practiced in unions and general assemblies from the Paris Commune to movements for worker ownership and management over factories in Argentinean during the first decade of the 21st century.

The struggle for the vote has been a part of the radical democratic fight for equal participation. For women in the U.S. this right has been recognized for only the last 85 years- one lifetime. While the most prominent leaders of the suffragists were liberal individualists some early feminist leaders were more radical in their condemnation of government, the exploitation of labor, liberal hypocrisy and demand for fundamental social change.

Mary Wollstonecraft was one of the authors of the *Declaration of Sentiments* and a supporter of political and social rights for women. She wrote

"The birthright of man...is such a degree of liberty, civil and religious, as is compatible with the liberty of every other individual with whom he is united in a social pact." (Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*)

<http://oll.libertyfund.org/index>

Unlike John Stuart Mill, Wollstonecraft didn't feel the need to disqualify "uncivilized peoples" from the blessings of liberty. Everyone had a right to participate equally in civic decision making. According to Roger Scruton's "A Dictionary of Political Thought" Wollstonecraft was a "champion of the libertarian and egalitarian ideals which she associated with the French Revolution." Her take on private property was in line with the radical critique of social inequality. She believed that "most of the evils" in society flowed from private property. (Ibid. p.90) This would turn out to be an important theoretical conviction of radical individualists. Freedom and equality or what the left today calls social justice are not at odds with one another but are mutually dependent on one another. Wollstonecraft not only supported individual freedom she also was a feminist, and an abolitionist.

Although she was writing at a time when modern capitalism was in its infancy, she argued against wealth privilege and the hereditary principal- the idea that wealth and official social privilege should be passed down from father to son.

There were some who picked up on Mary Wollstonecraft's radical individualists ideas. The rest of part 1 will take a closer look at those who did and their opponents.

Freedom and the body

"We have decided to take up the struggle against capitalist oppression where it is most deeply rooted- in the quick of our body, with all the desires that it produces, that we want to liberate from the occupying forces..." It's women in revolt against male power- implanted for centuries in their own bodies; homosexuals in revolt against terroristic normality; the young in revolt against the pathological authority of adults." -The Wicked Messengers

Anarcho-Individualism and Anarcha- Feminism

The anarcha- feminist view of sexual and domestic freedom is grounded in the philosophy of selfhood or what the feminist scholars Catriona Mackenzie and Natalie Stoljar have called relational autonomy. As the phrase suggests, relational autonomy rejects definitions of the self that are modernistic and enclosed. It acknowledges the intersection of identities and values all of those ideals that give substance to post patriarchal conceptions of the social self - cooperation, compassion, mutualism. It does so in a way that does not relinquish bodily self determination over to a state or 'collective.' Thus the individual retains decision making authority over those aspects of her life that are connected to the exercise of bodily autonomy (reproductive choice, euthanasia, domestic/sexual freedom, etc.) but presumably does so in a manner that recognizes the "complex of intersecting social determinants" that wed all of our choices to a larger social fabric.

As I've said in the introduction, relational autonomy or selfhood is radically different from the individualism of property based market society. While the latter view puts at the center of its project the rational self interested man who seeks above all else freedom from impediments to contract, the former seeks social agency in a world in which institutions routinely usurp that agency in the name of order, morality, and most recently public health and safety.

The classical liberal ideal of universal equal rights and liberty which provided the abolitionist movement with a rhetorical foothold to challenge the prevailing oppression of blacks, came out of the liberal view of the self. This was also the case with first and second wave feminism in the U.S. While addressing the absolute rejection of force, a central tenant of anarcho-individualism, the prolific anarcho-individualist political writer Wendy McElroy explained

"to the individualist feminist, aggression is defined with reference to property titles. To such a feminist, the ultimate reason that it is wrong to use force against a woman is because it violates her self-ownership, it denies her title to her own body."

<http://www.wendymcelroy.com/indfem2.htm>

Where might this "title" come from if not from a state? Who would enforce it should it be violated? McElroy does not say. But in some other writings of hers she expresses support for a Rothbardian approach to social administration

that would encourage private corporations to compete for the opportunity to provide police, courts, prisons and, one supposes, title deed offices, to willing buyers on a "free" market. The idea that corporations could be as domineering or repressive as governments is rejected. For her "there are two basic classes: the criminal or political class which acquires wealth and power through force, including legislation, and the economic class which acquires wealth and power through voluntary exchange with others." One wonders whether it has occurred to McElroy that in the type of society she advocates the political class and the economic class would hardly be distinguishable. In fact, today in the U.S. they're certainly not.

A free market without capitalism, as envisioned in the early classical liberal period, would mean the abolition of corporations- private, closed, fascist structures that, by law, must put profit making above as else. Her embrace of Murry Rothbard, and his great synthesis of anarcho-individualism, Austrian school capitalism, and old right non-interventionism, makes any musings about early anti-capitalist, anarcho-individualism on her part hollow.

Because liberal has become such a dirty word on the left, even someone as clearly liberal as McElroy goes through great pains to draw distinctions between what she calls "mainstream" feminism and the individualist creed. Voting seems to be the big gulf. For her voting is a validation of the criminal class as such. She seems to think that because no one would have the "right" to get together, plan things that would effect others not present, and execute those plans in her ideal world, that it simply wouldn't happen-

even if they had private police forces and armies and control over major media outlets. Any attempt, however local, directly democratic, and participatory, to counter the first force with one based on the second is tyranny.

There are plenty of McElroy individualists who don't vote. They don't vote because they have better things to do like make more money and smoke more pot. This doesn't make them "radical" as McElroy suggests (she uses the term to describe anarcho-individuals in her writings)

Her proceduralist take on justice reveals further the fundamentally liberal nature of the anarcho-individualist project. She writes her concept of justice is "means-oriented: that is, justice refers to methodology and not to a specific social or economic arrangement. As long as a given social state results from the voluntary interactions of everyone involved, then *whatever* arrangements result are just." (Her emphasis) Else where in her Introduction to Individualist Feminism talk she explains the socialist feminist concept of economic coercion but not why she's at odds with it.

"If a woman explicitly consents to work at an extremely low wage, but does so only because she would starve otherwise, the socialist feminist would argue that consent has not occurred. The economic situation created by capitalism is the equivalent of a gun pointed at the head of the women. I don't want to explore any more theory, so I'll end the analysis here." (Ibid.)

Just when it was getting interesting...

McElroy believes that mass starvation should be always be kept in the corporate deck of cards- just in case the workers get a little too uppity. This sounds eerily like a 1970's Guatemala work camp under Armas. I don't think McElroy would get a kick out of that, but her ideal society would interpret work camps as perfectly fine just as long as the workers "freely" chose them over starvation.

Individualist feminism is liberal feminism- as most of us know. Sure, plenty of individualists don't vote and wish the government would go away. That doesn't make them radical. That description belongs to those individualist who have opposed self- ownership in favor of self possession, private property in favor of economic democracy and procedural justice in favor of social justice, anti-politics in favor of equal, full, open participation in collective decision making.

One issue that liberal individualists and radicals did have in common was free love- a movement that rose out of a reaction to Victorian Age sex repression and patriarchy. That repression had an important effect on the development of our resistance to attacks on bodily autonomy and selfhood.

Sex and Civilization

In the 1890's Sigmund Freud developed his concept of the tri-part ego which included a counterpart to social authority- the superego-agent of internal (psychological) sex repression. Freud argued that it was this internal

instinctual repression that enabled the development of civilization.

"in consequence of the inverse relation holding between civilization and the free development of sexuality, of which the consequence can be followed far into the structure of our existence's, the course taken by the sexual life of a child is just as unimportant for later life where the cultural or social level is relatively low as it is important where that level is relatively high." (Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality, Sigmund Freud (Basic Books 1962) P.xxiv)

For Freud the word civilization described "the whole sum of the achievements and the regulations which distinguish our lives from those of our animal ancestors and which serve two purposes-namely to protect men against nature and to adjust their mutual relations." (Civilization and its Discontents, Sigmund Freud P. 42) He goes on to describe how man's triumph over nature through industry and technology has made man more god like and added that "countries have attained a high level of civilization if we find that in them everything which can assist in the exploitation of the earth by man and in his protection against the forces of nature." Ibid.

There are other views. In the 1960's Herbert Marcuse pointed out the divergent power demands of civilization and free society for social domination. "Basic Repression," the constituent instinctual renunciation required to support

human life, remains to tame (the particularly male- my note) aggressive tendencies, sexual coercion, and subsistence production. In his seminal book *Eros and Civilization* Marcuse writes that "surplus repression" amounted to

"the restrictions necessitated by social domination. This is distinguished from (basic) repression: the "modification" of the instincts necessary for the perpetuation of the human race." (Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization* (Beacon Press 1955) P.35)

If "the urge for freedom...is directed against particular forms and demands of civilization or against civilization altogether" (*Civilization and its Discontents*, Sigmund Freud P.50) and that "it is impossible to overlook the extent to which civilization is built up upon a renunciation of instinct." (ibid.P.51) than the type of individualism that concerns itself with bodily liberation and self determination (the radical kind) first must defend itself from the specter of civilization. State hegemony, capitalism, the mastery of nature and animal life, all need sexual repression to stabilize a social order that is responsive to their cultural and economic needs. But the complete internalization of this repression is the goal of civilization. The optimum triumph of internal repression is to indoctrinate so thoroughly that the very idea of repression itself becomes suspect. This makes the very argument for radical individualism superfluous.

In his book *The History of Sexuality* Michael Foucault called into question Marcuse's "repression hypothesis" and argued that repression is not a central theme in the history of the relationship between sex and power. While not denying the various prohibitions enforced against sex expression over the centuries, Foucault rejected the attempt to

"make prohibition into the basic and constitutive element from which one would be able to write the history of what has been said concerning sex starting from the modern epoch...all these negative elements- defenses censorships, denials- which the repressive hypothesis groups together in one great central mechanism destined to say no, are doubtless only component parts that have a local and tactical role to play in a transformation into discourse..."
(*History of Sexuality*, Michael Foucault (Vintage Books 1978) P.12).

His approach instead was to examine the different ways in which the new study of 'sexuality' represented an invitation to discourse and how this proliferation of discourses served to administer and regulate sex/power relations. In short, Foucault viewed sexual liberationists as barking up the wrong tree and imagines that "Our eagerness to speak of sex in terms of repression is doubtless this opportunity to speak out against the powers that be, to utter truths and promise bliss..." *ibid* P.13

Viewing external sex repression as a prominent feature in the historical development of liberal market culture is distinct from asserting that prohibition is the singular "constitutive element" of our sexual history. But it should also be stated that there are a number of sexual histories that can not be fully understood without reference to the many punishments, persecutions and genocides that have been carried out by the nuclear family, the church, and the state. This external sex repression, particularly when executed by the state, does for all intents, constitute a "great central mechanism." And not only does it say no, it has been known to kill. Sometimes in mass, like the genocide of over 10,000 homosexuals in Nazi concentration camps in the 1930's, or sometimes one by one like the various cases of castration and lynching of black men in the American south for sex offenses involving white women. While the concern here isn't only with the prominence of prohibition and censorship in the historical treatment of western sexuality, it's important to establish that sex repression is about more than just amount of discourse taking place about it.

Foucault's point about the hyper production of sexual discourse over the last 150 years can be acknowledged alongside the reality of sex repression without either phenomenon excluding the other. The question of sexual repression is a relative one; its 'truth' contextual. The concept, however, has been a useful tool in helping to demonstrate the lengths to which the state will go in denying its subjects freedom over their own bodies. The arrest of hundreds of thousands of people each year for sex crimes and the sanction and abuse of millions more for

sexual deviancy shows us that while the 'chattering class' has been doing a great deal of discoursing about sexuality the state has been imposing a great deal of repression on consensual sexual activity as well.

The lifting of sex repression doesn't equate with liberation. Although in many cases the state is directly responsible for sex exploitation (the prohibition on prostitution, immigration policy) other social forces are at work as well. The corporate sex industry has demonstrated its ability to absorb, and commodify all manner of alternative sexual "lifestyles." But repression itself still constitutes a formidable obstruction along the road to liberation.

The eradication of all the trappings of repressive state authority connected to our bodies- prohibition, censorship, propaganda, and the social values that enforce there logic- sexual shame, and patriarchy are necessary steps toward bodily liberation.

Essentialism and the Freudian Left

Jeffery Weeks in his 1985 book *Sexuality and its Discontents* did not reject out of hand the idea of sex repression. He spent a number of pages denouncing the cultural traditionalists offensive against the so called permissiveness of the 1960's. But he also took aim at sexual liberationists for their "essentialism." Although on some points he failed to be specific, he did identified Wilhelm Reich's work on sexual liberation with this label. According to Weeks, Reich "put a conflict between orgiastic

potency and repression." The problem with sex essentialism, says Weeks, is that it seeks to find a "truth of sex- in biology usually, in the instinct, the chromosomes and hormones, the DNA, the genes..." Thus making it "impossible to confront, let alone answer, key questions about identity, pleasure, power, choice..." (Jeffery Weeks, *Sexuality and its Discontents: Myths and Modern Sexualities* (Taylor and Francis, July 2003) P.8)

It might be helpful here to retrace the terms of the sexuality debate in the early part of the 20th century to give Reich's views some context. At least in Europe and the U.S., the largest, most powerful and most vocal forces concerned with the new sexuality were the social conservatives and the fascists.

Sexual Repression is Fascist Culture

In Reich's Germany, Heinrich Himmler, head of the SS, established the third Reich's Central Agency for the Struggle Against Homosexuality and Abortion in 1936 with the goal of eradicating the twin cultural menaces through propaganda, imprisonment, and death in "extreme cases." In Rome Pope Pius issued an encyclical that condemned all sex without intent to procreate, "imposed an absolute prohibition on contraception and abortion," and "insisted on women's subordinate position in the family." (Rev. Worker P.2) A few years earlier in America Anthony Comstock was busy persecuting anarchist free love and birth control advocates like Ezra Heywood for sending information on contraceptives through the U.S. mail. The social conservatives were against any attempts to explain or

rationalize sexual behavior in terms of biology. This would have the effect of taking sex out of the realm of Christian morality- good and evil, temptation, sin, abstinence, weakness. Science threatened to invalidate a whole religious lexicon rooted in the fear and hatred of women's bodies.

By the same token, the Marxist reaction to the developing theories of sex was hostile as well. Many viewed "sexuality" as an invention of the decadent bourgeois and rejected Freud and his followers as "perverse." Like the right-wing, the Marxists resisted studying sexuality through the rapidly developing biological and psychological modals of empirical epistemology. In fact it was Reich's insistence on forging a synthesis between Freudian psychoanalysis and Marxism that got him booted out of the Communist Party.

It was in this climate that Reich tried to extricate the sexual from the shackles of what he referred to as 'compulsory moral regulation," and the Marxist attempts to impose a type of neo-Spartan ethic on the proletariat. Reich created a counter analysis, sex-economic, and applied it to the symptom of neurotic personality disorders. His basic premise was correct. Sexual attraction is a nearly universal human phenomenon that's planted in our bio-psychological make up. Not only does familial and social sex repression have wide spread negative implications for the formation of 'character,' it also has social ramifications as well- the reinforcement of authoritarian cultural and political structures being the most significant. This assertion hardly makes Reich a sex

essentialist. That label properly belongs to the legions of social conservatives who view sex solely as a function of procreation within the context of the patriarchal monogamous marriage between a man and a woman. Reich argued for 'self regulation' and believed that authoritarian sex morality, with its endless attempts to coerce a singular 'essential' modal for sex activity, caused human neurosis and unhappiness. Reich also believed that the lifting of compulsory sex morality would lead to the end of "perversions." He was wrong on this and on a number other points. He wrote

"The healthy person is virtually without compulsive morality. Any residual anti-social impulses are easily controlled if the basic genital needs are gratified. Sexual intercourse with prostitutes become offensive; by the same token, former anal, exhibitionistic, or other perversions also recede..." (Wilhelm Reich The Sexual Revolution (Vision Press, 1951) P.7)

He also included "homosexuality" in his list of perversions.

Reich erred by attempting to extrapolate from the social reality of coercive sex socialization a linear model of health and neurosis based on the adequate release of 'damned up' sexual energies through the orgasm. Reich's approach might be correctly labeled determinist for its presumption that "sexual energy is the biological energy which, in the psyche, determines the character of human feeling and thinking." (ibid P.xxiii) What he was trying

to account for was the difference between authoritarian character formations and 'normal' ones through bio-science- a product of the times to be sure. He thought by extending these biological laden orientations towards sex -outward- he could explain how sexuality had an impact on the social power arrangements in society. Perhaps Reich's reliance on "cosmic orgone energy" to describe a bio- sex economy of humans seems a bit bizarre today (as it surely did 70 years ago) But in reality it was a crude attempt to wrest sexuality out of the grasp of centuries of religious superstition, and bigotry which, at that time, still dominated the discourse on sex.

Both Reich and Marcuse attempted to explain the ways in which the social order under liberal capitalism had been *constructed* to reproduce the types of social personalities needed to perpetuate and promote values friendly to the maintenance of mass exploitation and subjugation. Week's view is different

"Capitalism did not create a personality type to fit its needs, let alone a sexual morality that was essential to the success of capital accumulation." (Sexuality and its Discontents, P 58)

For Weeks liberal individualist market culture with its emphasis on materialism consumption, competition, self-interest, and ambition has not been a determinative factor in our sexual life and culture. More importantly, capital exploitation of female sexuality to sale products is unimportant in the development of market commodification

patterns- an important aspect of individual/ social psychology in a market society. Its hard to see how anyone who describes their position on sexuality as "radical," pluralist or otherwise, could have such a constricted view of the influence of economic structures on social relations. The radical individualists view isn't that there's some capitalist cabal trying to keep people from having sex in order to meet the demands of production. The idea is that our economic and cultural arrangements have social consequences and heavily influence the way that individuals see themselves in relate to others, including sexually.

Taking on Emma

Bonnie Haaland in her book Emma Goldman: Sexuality and the Impurity of the State extends Week's critique of sex libertarianism to Emma Goldman. Her take is similar.

"Goldman believed that sexuality possesses an essential essence (specific to each gender) which remained stable and constant. Assuming that sexuality was a driving instinctual force, rooted in the biology of women and men, Goldman placed sexual expression on a par with other biological "needs" such as those for air, food, and water. Her views on sexuality, therefore, fit into Week's more specific classification of "naturalist essentialism." (Emma Goldman: Sexuality and the Impurity of the State, Bonnie Haaland (Black Rose Books 1993) P.117)

Goldman's real views articulated the experiential connection between bodily self autonomy and free expression. For Goldman self autonomy clears the space for the body to take on the project of expression. The expressive self is the self on display and it's through this exhibition that one's being is encountered. This is what Goldman meant when she said that "the very essence of individuality is expression." It's within this context that sexual liberation becomes more than just "sex for sex's sake" as Week's book claimed it was. It turns into the representation of individuals playing out new self creations through expression and in this sense becomes a *political* factor in the war over culture.

Haaland went on to describe her framework of analysis as "social constructionist." She announced

"My analysis of Goldman's ideas on sexuality and reproduction...(are) developed through social constructionist perspectives (and) begin with the assumption that the meaning of all human activity is socially constructed and organized. Social constructionism assumes that the meanings and definitions of all human phenomenon are "constructed" by the social structures and discourses of the community or society in which they are played out." (ibid P xxi)

Some of the insights of the social constructionist approach have been helpful in promoting a more emancipated view of humans in relation to nature and the supposed and real gender imperatives of biology. It is true- we do

ultimately determine the social meanings of all manner of phenomenon. But there are dangers here as well. Social constructionism has distinctly positivist origins and contributed to the totalitarian conception of people as infinitely malleable in the hands of the social scientists. Both German fascism and Soviet communism had notions of the 'New Man' his sensibilities, his very consciousness, shaped by the Nation or the demands of the great proletariat industrial machine. This was Progress.

Further in Haaland's book she continued her exaggeration and attack on Goldman's views on sex and its relationship to power. At one point in her book she claims that Goldman's "support of the ideas of Freud caused her to uncritically accept his view that women were, in fact, intellectually inferior." (ibid. P.58) Harland provides no evidence for this outrageous attribution except for a passage Goldman wrote related to sex celibacy, and its connection to depression, perhaps not only as effect but as cause. I don't know about you, but when I haven't gotten laid in a while I get a little depressed too.

Goldman's distaste for abstinence was real. For her, free love represented an affirmation of human connectedness, and sensuality. At times her sentiments were romantic but this romance was in opposition to Victorian era sexual repression and the growing mechanization of industrial society. Presaging the anarcha-feminists of the 1960's, she refused to be agnostic on this question. Goldman did agree with Freud's basic view of the life and death instincts and believed that sex attraction represented the will towards mutuality, pleasure, and life.

Goldman did not embrace all of Freud's work. In fact, her view of the clinical application of Freud's ideas - psychoanalysis, was critical to the point of dismissing it as "nothing but the old confessional." (EG to Frank Heifer, 24 July 1934, XIV, Egg Archive). There is no question that there are many musings and half-cocked "theories" of Freud that are anti-women as feminist Freudians have pointed out decades ago. But the idea that Goldman's openness to Freud's conception of repression, and the component human instincts, lead her to conclusions of the inferiority of women is not supported by any of her writings or activism.

Feminist Authoritarianism

The objections to the call for free love and bodily autonomy dates back to the very beginnings of the sexual liberation movement in the 1870's. Even back then the lines were clearly drawn. On one side you had the social purists who consisted largely of temperance movement Christen female activists and others concerned with the moral hazards of prostitution (white slavery) gambling, and other self-regarding acts. Their arguments often emphasized the frailty and venerability of women and children and viewed traditional morality backed by state force as the only power that could rein in the excesses of men. In their view demands for more liberated sexuality not only went against long standing Christen values, but put women and girls in jeopardy at the hands of out-of-control drunkards and perverts.

On the other, hand free love advocates saw sexual liberation as the empowerment of female social agency and believed it to be, in the words of Victoria Woodhull

“an inalienable constitutional and natural right to love as long or as short a period as I can; to change that love everyday if I please.” (Free Love and Anarchism: The Biography of Ezra Heywood Martin Henry Blatt (University of Illinois Press 1989) P. 72)

Many feminists even today who speak out against bodily autonomy take this sexual freedom for granted. The opponents of any *further* sexual liberation principally see women and girls as social victims and spend much of their time seeking to shield, protect, and save women from men, and, more importantly, themselves.

Echoing the Marxist line, most women are victims of a ‘false consciousness’ that’s shaped by the Patriarchy. As has been pointed out in the past, this brand of academic paternalism is especially offensive in the way it dismisses and dis-empowers women who disagree with the presumptions of the authoritarian feminists in the academy. If you’re a sex worker or a women who likes pornography it’s because you’ve been brain washed and you subconsciously hate women and yourself.

Anarcha- feminism puts a premium on female potentiality and agency and declines to view women *primarily* as sexual victims. Noted feminist and sex liberationist Alice Echols expressed this sentiment when she declared the “struggle

for sexual pleasure is legitimate and need not imply a callous disregard of sexual danger." (The Taming of the id Feminist Sexual Politics, 1968-83, Alice Echols P.66)

The common retort by the anti- sex forces is that, in the words of Bonnie Haaland "as long as power relations favor men, greater sexual expression runs the risk of being at the expense of women." (Emma Goldman: Sexuality and the Impurity of the State, P. 152) This general proposition is rarely supported by a relevant example, or evidence.

If sodomy, social nudity, or public sex acts were legalized how would this be at the expense of women? For radical individualists, and anarchists, consent is a prerequisite for informed choice. We don't equate more sexual choice with more violations against women. There's also a recognition that maturity level is a factor in one's ability to consent. (Although I'm against age of consent laws due to their age arbitrariness) Sexual freedom means freedom from coercion - state, corporate, religious, and interpersonal. The notion that the "celebration of sex can easily become a glorification of all manifestations of desire" as Jeffery Weeks wrote ignores the fact that the very basis of anti- authoritarian ethics is freedom. If an institution or another person is trying to take away that freedom through force or manipulation that's inconsistent with radical liberation principles.

Porn

Modern day social purists often cite pornography as an example of sexual privilege and domination under the guise

of sexual freedom. Catherine McKinnon's views are representative

"Empirically, all pornography is made under conditions of inequality based on sex, overwhelmingly by poor, desperate, homeless, pimped, women who were sexually abused as children." (Catherine MacKinnon, Only Words (Harvard University Press 1993) P.20)

Although in her book, Only Words, she failed to cite the evidence of this 'empirical' assertion she goes on to purpose prohibiting the sexually explicit to save these poor and misguide women from themselves.

"Andrea Dworkin and I have proposed a law against pornography that defines it as graphic sexually explicit materials that subordinate women through pictures or words." (Only Words, P.22).

Of course this definition is purposeful so broad it could include anything from PG-13 Hollywood movies, to the 1-900 phone sex ads in the back of most major city tabloids. Despite the fact that the porn banners have never been able to show that the level of sexual explicit material in circulation has any relation to the amount of sexual violence being committed against women at any given time, they would give the state (through the apparatus of the civil courts) the authority to set liability damages for plaintiffs who could demonstrated a link between a piece of pornographic material and some perceived harm. And because all pornographic material is 'empirically' degrading to

women due to the condition of inequality, anyone who takes a picture of a nude women who appears to be sexually aroused can look forward to a summons notice in the mail - De facto censorship. So much for sexual freedom.

At the root of this attempt to censor sex porn is a prevailing attitude that assumes that sex its self is an exercise in submission and domination. According to Mackinnon "sexuality is itself violating." "If there is no inequality, no violation, no dominance, no force, there is no sexual arousal." "Woman share...degradation in intimacy." And "Rape and intercourse express the same power relation."

Bell Hooks in her essay Ending Female Sexual Oppression noted that "Feminist activists who see male sexuality as inherently despicable have been those most willing to de-emphasize issues of sexual freedom." But the Dworkin's and Mackinnon's of the feminist movement go beyond de-emphasis of sexual freedom into direct hostility to it. And this antipathy is not limited to hetero-sexual representations of the sexuality explicit either. The Dworkin/ Mackinnon purposed law would also cover other genders.

"The use of men, children, or transsexuals in the place of women...is pornography for purposes of this law."(Quoted from Nadine Strossen's Defending Pornography: Free Speech, Sex and the fight for Women's Right, (Abacus Books 1995)P. 106)

This reveals a general hostility toward all sexuality and individual sexual agency, not just the type that exploits women.

Nadine Strossen, President of the American Civil Liberties Union, pointed out

"Mackinnon views even nonviolent consensual sex as inherently degrading to women; it isn't surprising, then, that she apparently considers any depiction of sex- not just images of violent, forced sex- to be oppressive." (ibid P. 111)

She also points out the reactionary nature of the anti-sex movement against porn by quoting feminists Lisa Duggan, Nan Hunter, and Carole Vance.

"Embedded in the [feminist pro-censorship] view are several...familiar themes: that sex is degrading to women, but not to men; that men are raving beasts; the sex is dangerous for women; that sexuality is male, not female, that women are victims, not sexual actors, that men inflict 'it' on women, that penetration is submission; heterosexual sexuality, rather than the institution of heterosexuality, is sexist...It's ironic that a feminist position on pornography incorporates most of the myths about sexuality that feminism has struggled to displace..." (ibid P.108)

The anarcha- feminist position on censorship readily acknowledges the exploitative and sexist nature of most pornography. But we attribute this to the corporatization of pornography rather than to anything that is inherent in the depiction of the sexually explicit. Corporate porn

seeks to maximize profit by pandering to our cultures deeply embedding male sadism and contempt for women. And it sells. But the answer to this dilemma isn't to ban sexually explicit material. Our reply to sexist corporate porn should be to take the profit motive out of pornography. We should create independent, affinity group porn that depicts women in strong, positive ways, in complete control of their sexuality. Do-it-yourself porn that challenges the popular stereotype of the passive, masochist, female. This is an answer to patriarchal porn not just an authoritarian attempt to muzzle it.

Because authoritarian feminists are convinced that women have no freewill and lack the capacity to make conscious choices about their bodies without help from Ivy League or Seven Sister professors, their animus towards sexual and bodily expression extends to transsexuals and sex change operations, make-up, piercing, tattoos, plastic surgery and, following their logic, one presumes- dyeing one's hair. By this measure the most oppressed women in the world can be found hanging out at heavy metal clubs on the Sunset Strip in LA.

Sheila Jeffreys, author of the paper "Queer Theory and Violence Against Women" claims that any attempt to alter, modify or add to one's body is a symptom of the Patriarchy. She labels make-up a "disguise" and claims

"piercing and tattooing is unfortunately not just a fashion. For many victims of sexual violence and lesbian and gay oppression cutting has become an

obsession, a way of having carried out on them with the cloak of acceptability the self-mutilation they would otherwise guiltily perform in their own rooms."

(Presented at Vancouver Rape Relief fundraising dinner, 24 September 1999.

Posted on Sisyph website April 2004.)

A nose ring as "self- mutilation"? Give me a fuckin' break.

For decades the trans community has been trying to explain that their desire to undergo operations or hormone therapy has more to do with the intense feeling that their born biological gender is not a true representation of their true selves- not because they "hate their body" due to over exposure to Cosmo magazine. Each of us lives in our bodies. For most of us it becomes our home. But for some they've never feel at home in their bodies. Some of this surely is culturally driven by male supremacy. But there is no proof that this is the predominate reason that some girls get tattoos or chose to start taking testosterone. As is often the case with highly ideological polemics, this analysis relies heavily on meta- theories about what motivates human behavior and choices and ignores what real people themselves actually say about why they do what they do. Women put make-up on because it makes them feel more beautiful and attractive. They don't see it as a "disguise." Telling them they should go to boring feminist conferences instead of putting on high heels and mini skirts and going dancing is pointless. Could this be why the authoritarian feminists are dwindling in numbers and influence?

Jeffreys lays most of the blame for all this bodily self hatred on Queer Theory.

"Queer theory is big on the importance of 'transgressing' the body's boundaries which turns out to mean carry out forms of violence upon it. The enthusiasm for 'transgenderism' often said to be different from transexualism also requires major reshaping of the offending body with chemical substances if not actual surgery. In queer theory prostituted women are transformed into a sexual minority or or a 'movement of affirmation' along with other practitioners or victims of violence such as sadomasochists, pedophiles, transsexuals and seen as rebels creating a new sexual future. In fact, of course, prostituted women are having to dissociate to survive, not being sexually liberated." Ibid.

Once again we see wholesale generalizations about women. Are all female sex workers in it too 'survive'? Heidi Fleiss? Deborah Jeane Palfrey? Please. These and countless other women of the night make more money in a year than I'll ever see in a lifetime. Again, we see the rejection of any notion of female sexual agency. Once again, the transgendered are mocked by know it all authoritarians for making what for many of them is the most life altering decision they'll ever make in a way that displeases certain

feminists. Naturally, Jeffrey labels queer theory "liberal individualist" because it "does not recognize politics as being concerned with the private realm." Queer theory is radical precisely because it rejects the imposition of prohibition politics in the bedroom. The ever present impulse to govern our bodies in order to save us from ourselves not only comes from the Right. And in case Jeffrey hasn't noticed contemporary liberalism does not argue for sexual or bodily privacy. No liberal figure of significance has called for the decriminalization of prostitution, or for lifting the restrictions on obscenity, or ending the prosecution of victimless "sex crimes" like mooning, streaking and flashing. As it turns out the authoritarian feminists and contemporary liberals are on the same page on about 75% of the sexual repression agenda. The other 25%- banning all pornography, ratcheting up penalties for sex offenders, closing down adult night clubs and porn shops- find these feminists in agreement with the religious right.

Liberalism, Marxism and the Feminist Battle for Selfhood

"Modern feminists [must] come to grips with the role of the State in perpetuating not only legal inequality but traditional sex roles and power relationships as well. The 19th century anarchist feminists, unlike most feminists today, never failed to understand that the State is inherently hierarchical and authoritarian."

-Sharon Presley

An anarchy-feminist understanding of sex, power and autonomy gives anarchism its most coherent, cultural interpretation of free equality. The ideological origins of this understanding are worth taking a closer look at.

An old argument is that anarchy-feminism is essentially individualist in its conception of humans and our relation to society. This is the anarchism of the radical liberal bourgeois-self indulgent libertinism-not quite revolutionary. The late Murry Bookchin, in a particularly crusted and resentful essay, *Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism*, said as much when he reminisced that there was a time when men were men, and real left anarchists "considered anarcho-individualism to be petty-bourgeois exotica" and a "middle-class indulgence, rooted far more in liberalism than in anarchism." We still do. But categorizing anarchy-feminists under "anarcho-individualism" is his sneaky way of dismissing all of feminism as liberal. If anarchy-feminists can't find a way

of making the struggle against patriarchy revolutionary, perhaps that's because there is something inherent in feminism that is essentially liberal reformist and-not vitally tethered to a fundamental change in social relations and power.

In the book Bookchin attacks the writer L. Susan Brown for her assertion of the confluence between anarchist and radical liberalism and her insistence that anarchism involved not only a rejection of private property, a sentiment shared by the Marxists, but also an affirmation of selfhood, an idea shared by liberals according to her. In her 1994 book *The Politics of Individualism*, Brown pointed to the shared theoretical concern radical liberalism and anarchism has for personal freedom and warned

"By ignoring the clear similarities and differences between liberalism and anarchism, one risks missing entirely both the revolutionary potential within liberalism and the possibility for creating popular support for anarchism within the context of a liberal society." (*The Politics of Individualism*, L. Susan Brown (Black Rose Books 1994) P.109)

She also investigated the profound difference between the individualism of liberal market society, and the feminist demand for 'individuality', and autonomy. These two tendencies, Brown argued, were both present in liberal theory and described the latter ideal as being "existential" in its aim of maximizing "choice, autonomy and self determination" (*ibid* P.76)

The existential individualism of anarchism, and classical liberalism rejected the view of freedom as merely an opportunity to pursue "self-interested relationships of ownership of real property and property in the person." This fundamental difference is perhaps best expressed in the struggle against chattel slavery. The white masters justified their 'freedom' to own black slaves in America by referring to their right to own property. The very essence of freedom in possessive liberal market society, as John Locke stated centuries ago, is defined by the individual's right to property and the state's duty to protect that right from the people without it- the other, more predominant, tradition of liberal individualism. This construction of individual freedom is radically different from the anarcho-feminist notion of bodily self-determination.

Bookchin apparently doesn't recognize such a distinction. For him, calls for bodily self-autonomy, if heeded, would lead to a society of "free-booting, self-seeking, egoistic monads," presumably just the type of punk rock scum Bookchin would expel out of his workers' paradise.

Bookchin is concerned about the people's ability to function if there aren't social institutions in society demanding that individuals submit themselves to its dictates 'for the common good.' He writes

"Left to his or her own self, the individual loses the indispensable social moorings that make for what an anarchist might be expected to prize in

individuality: reflective powers" (Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism: An Unbridgeable Chasm, Murray Bookchin (AK Press 1995) P. 16)

If Bookchin happens to knock on your door one day ordering you to come out and play you better go. It's important that the collective knows that you're 'social'. Instead of taking seriously the historical struggles for bodily autonomy against the oppressions of chattel slavery, serfdom and patriarchal marriage, Bookchin dichotomizes the free individual and society. He worries that

"If individual "autonomy" overrides any commitment to a "collectively", there is no basis whatever for social institutionalization decision-making or even administrative coordination. Each individual, self contained in his or her 'autonomy' is free to do whatever he or she wants- presumably, following the old liberal formula, if it does not impede the "autonomy of others." (ibid P.17)

The question isn't whether selfhood "overrides commitment to a collectively." It's a matter of determining the correct limits of social coercion in a society that prizes both equality and freedom. Simply put, there are matters that are tied directly to our bodies that the "collective" has no legitimate authority to determine. The fact that individuals should get to make those decisions for themselves does not necessarily constitute a severance of the individual from the collective or a lunge into cultural

atomism. It just means people will have control over their own bodies and get to make decisions about how they will live their own lives. The "collectively" can be just another euphemism for state, church, or corporate domination over our bodies.

The claim that anarcha-feminism is a liberal individualist ideal of society is wrong. Relational autonomy is understood as an indispensable component of social freedom—not a substitute for it. The view is that real social freedom includes the right and ability to participate equally in decisions over the administration and allocation of public resources, collective, participatory decision making, and selfhood (Self determination over one's body). Any self-proclaimed anarchist community that would through the guise of democracy, seek to "govern" what we do with our bodies in the name of administrative coordination is illegitimate in a society that is presumably conceived in the ideal of social equality.

Bookchin's claim is that this autonomy would make any attempt at collective community organization impossible. How does reproductive choice obstruct administrative coordination? How would the decriminalization of illegal drugs, or the eradication of laws against suicide, and euthanasia disrupt the collective's capacity to democratically set utility rates or plan development? How do laws that prohibit public nudity or polygamy enhance the public administration of trash collection or public works projects? The answer is that it doesn't. Bookchin's approach recognizes no boundaries of popular will. Individuals have no rights that aren't subject to review

from "the collective." If someone's actions are determined by the collective to be anti-social or even odd they must be "forced to be free" by community coercion. Meet the new boss same as the old boss.

This recognition of the limits of popular decision making doesn't render attempts by those who've been locked out of equal participation in community decision making naïve or closet authoritarians for wanting their voices to be heard. It does mean that this aspect of selfhood too has circumscribed boundaries in a free society.

Bookchin thought that as long as the citizens democracy was locally based that that made it libertarian. This notion is reminiscent of the states rights ideal of local sovereignty. In this context it makes little difference whether we're talking about direct democracy or a parliamentary system. The critical question is the scope of authority executed by administrative bodies. As any Black person who lived through Jim Crow could attest this position can easily be used as a mere mask for privilege and repression.

Sexual Liberation and Individualism

By inclusion, the liberal individualist label has also been thrown at proponents of sexual liberation as well. Nancy Chodorow in her book *Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory* makes this charge against Marcuse and Norman O'Brown. Brown, author of several important books (*Life Against Death*, *Love's Body*) exploring Freudian interpretations of the role of Eros in repressive society, was criticized for seeing "all social bonds" as "exclusively constraining and

oppressive." She then goes on to cite a number of quotes from Love's Body that directly contradict her individualist label of Brown. Brown directly attacks liberal individualism. In a chapter in Love's Body oddly enough entitled "Unity" Brown stated

"The individual is obtained by division; integration of the individual is a strictly contradictory enterprise, as becomes evident in the futile attempts of the therapist to define "what we mean by mental health" in the individual." (Love's Body, Norman Brown P.86)

He also claimed that

"Only in one world can we be one. The inner voice, the personal salvation, the private experience are all based on illusory distinction. Consciousness is as collective as the unconscious; there is only one psyche ego-cosmic, in relation to which all conflict is endopsychic, all war intestine." (ibid P.87)

Brown's recognition of the ultimate unity of humanness is not some nebulous embrace of our 'oneness' but instead is rooted in a critic of the inability of liberal individualism to create psychic/ social wholeness out of a property based conception of the individual-society dilemma. His own words, some of which Chodorow herself quotes, belie any tendency towards the individualism of liberal market society she claims he supports.

Chodorow's take on Marcuse is much the same. She stated Marcuse's "critique of collectivism and conformity" in *Eros and Civilization* "moves him to a hyper-individualism and lack of ability to envision a concrete total social formation..." (Nancy Chodorow, *Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory* (Yale University Press 1989) P. 126) As it turns out there is no "critique of collectivism" in *Eros and Civilization*. It's just not there. And while it is true that Marcuse has been critical of the tendency of technological rationality to exacerbate social conformity, his work that dealt most exhaustively with that problem was *One Dimensional Man* not *Eros and Civilization*.

Marcuse, a life long socialist, always recognized the bourgeois individualism of the state capitalist order as a force for the continued atomization and social isolation of people. But like the anarchy-feminists he also knew that not all social conceptions of the individual were the same.

"to be sure, the concept of the bourgeois individual has become the ideological counterpoint to the competitive economic subject and the authoritarian head of the family. To be sure, the concept of the individual as developing freely in solidarity with others can become a reality only in a socialist society. But the fascist period and monopoly capitalism have decisively changed the political value of these concepts...Today the rejection of the individual as a "bourgeois" concept recalls and presages fascist undertakings. Solidarity and community do not mean

absorption of the individual. They rather originate in autonomous individual decision; they unite freely associated individuals, not masses."(Herbert Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension* (Beacon Press 1977) P.38)

Chodorow seems to base her liberal individualist tag not on anything Brown or Marcuse has actually written but on her various interpretations of the implications of their advocacy of sex liberation. In this respect she follows other critics who insist that lifting sex repression necessarily diminishes the social bonds needed to sustain community. There certainly are many communities that base their existence on repressive sexual codes and norms. If the triumph of sexual liberation means the death of these communities all the better. She is correct when she points out that Brown and Marcuse's vision for post-repressive society is not complete and leaves more questions than answers. But she fails to explain fully herself how liberated sexuality leads to or is linked with the type of individualism she argues against. Sex liberationists have never claimed that gratification and play are "all there is" only that their repression is motivated by the political and cultural imperatives of authority and capital and their true liberation signifies, at the very least, a disruption of the political economy of bodily coercion and market manipulation of female bodies.

In some of Emma Goldman's earliest writings we see the idea that anarchist society is a society of free individuals *and* collective economics and viewed the two aspects of revolution as both necessary for social freedom.

In her 1913 essay *Syndicalism: Its Theory and Practice* Goldman was clear about the need to overthrow capitalism through militant struggle for worker control over production. While advocating for the syndicalist methods of direct action, sabotage, and general strike in the "war" against capital she wrote

"Realizing that the diametrically opposed interests of capital and labor can never be reconciled, syndicalism must repudiate the old, rusticated, worn-out methods of trade-unionism, and declare for an open war against the capitalist regime, as well as against every institution which to-day supports and protects capitalism." (Emma Goldman *Syndicalism: Its Theory and Practice* (Pamphlet Reprinted by the Workers Solidarity Alliance 1913) P. 3)

This hostile view of capital among anarcho-feminists has always been the dominant view and happens to be the only view that has survived over decades. But Goldman also wrote about the battles for individuality and made the distinction between that and what later was labeled 'possessive individualism' by C.B. Macpherson in his book *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism*. She wrote

"Individuality is not to be confused with the various ideas and concepts of individualism...which is only a masked attempt to repress and defeat the individual and his individuality." (Alix Kates

Shulman, Red Emma Speaks (Vintage Books 1972)
P.89)

And again she distances herself from market individualism

"Rugged individualism has meant all the individualism for the master, while the people are regimented into a slave caste to serve a handful of self-serving supermen" (ibid.)

Goldman did not think that the expression of one's individuality and the administrative requirements of workers control in an economic democracy were exclusive. She argued for both right along side one other as if the two were complimentary. This has been the general understanding of anarcha-feminism since the time of Goldman up to the present.

In the 1960's, 70's, and 80's anti- authoritarian feminists like Cathy Levine and Peggy Kornegger spoke out unequivocally against capitalism. Peggy Kornegger, in her 1975 article Anarchism: The Feminist Connection labeled "feminist capitalism" a "contradiction in terms" and called for a commitment to "anti-capitalist, non-consumption values." (P. 2) She also stated her belief that "Individuality is not incompatible with communist thought" and argued for a synthesis of free "individuality" and economic "collectivity." The idea that this concern with personal freedom made the feminist movement against authority into just another strand of market liberal individualism misses the clear emphasis many of these thinkers and activists put on the need for the complete

overthrow of capitalism. They viewed liberalism's, at least, theoretical praise of things like civil liberties, and rights as useful in the construction of a cultural consensus for of bodily self determination, agency and choice. The idea was that real freedom must include bodily self-autonomy and that the people had no need for a state to superintend their "self-regarding" acts.

This talk tends to infuriate the old class war leftists. They still believe that all oppression can be explain by or reduced to class analysis and any attempt to put any other struggle for liberation on par with the class struggle must be denigrated as "bourgeois" or "separatist." For this heresy Victoria Woodhull was personally expelled by Karl Marx from the International Workmen's Association in 1872. According Labor historian Martin Henry Blatt, she was shut for out for

"elevating the women's question over the issue of labor and for organizing around such issues as suffragist, dress reform, free love, and spiritualism." (Free Love and Anarchism: The Biography of Ezra Heywood P. 71)

From the very beginning issues of bodily autonomy were dismissed by the materialists as merely a concern of women and therefore not to be taken seriously. This included anarchists as well. Proudhon was notorious for his dismissal of 'the women question' and his support for the patriarchal family and social relations. In reaction to an article Emma Goldman wrote in the anarchist paper Free

Society the famous mutualist anarchist Peter Kropotkin commented

“The paper is doing splendid work...but it would do more if it would not waste so much space discussing sex...When she [woman] is his equal intellectually and shares his social ideals, she will be as free as he.” (Free Society, Peter Kropotkin P.4 1895)

60 years later John Wayne said the same thing in his attempt to justify white racial domination. But this attitude is present on the left as well. Anarchist's continue to today and this sentiment pops up occasional in scattered pamphlets and essays like Bookchin's 1995 hatchet job on L. Susan Brown. Brown's book, I think, does little towards reconciliation of autonomy and collectivism due to its over zealous rejection of the importance of community and her embrace of the classical liberal tradition. Nevertheless her contribution was important because it pointed to the main philosophical fissure within left anarchism and tried to at least address some of its contours.

Dialectic Materialism and Anarchy

The crux of the disagreement between the old left and anarcha- feminism is the rejection by the latter of the materialist view of human motivation. Although many thoughtful Marxists over the last century have substantially modified the scope of its original claims, materialism- the view that the conditions of production, and the arrangement of resources in society are *the*

determining factors in history, and the development of consciousness- still constitutes the main substance of Marxist dialectics. All other social phenomenon in society can either be explained as *derivative* to struggle between classes over resources and the condition of labor or as bourgeois 'ideology' which amounts to nothing more than systems of thought invented by the masters to justify their domination, and exploitation of the workers. Marx wrote

"The phantoms formed in the human brain are also, necessarily, sublimates of their material life process, which is empirically verifiable and bound to material premises. Morality, religion, metaphysics, all the rest of ideology and their corresponding forms of consciousness, thus no longer retain the semblance of independence. They have no history, no development; but men developing their material production and their material intercourse...Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life." (The Marx- Engels Reader, Edited by Robert C. Tucker (W.W. Norton Company 1972) P. 351)

This belief is what makes the class war the 'primary' locus of revolutionary struggle. Its the proletariat who are the historical agents of revolution according to the 'laws' evolutionary social science and to the extent that other groups in society are oppressed their liberation lies in the workers struggle against capital domination.

The materialist view taught that women were oppressed not because of male domination but because of class domination.

Once she became a worker within the great industrial machine along side men, sex oppression would disappear. In Engel's *The Origin of Private Property* the Marxists addressed the issue as such

"...the emancipation of women becomes possible only when women are enabled to take part in production on a large, social scale and domestic work no longer claims anything but an insignificant amount of her time. And only now has that become possible through modern large-scale industry which does not merely permit of the employment of female labor over a wide range, but positively demands it..."
(Fredrick Engels, *The Women Question* (Little New World Paperbacks 1951) P.11)

And before you think that all this was left behind by the class warriors in the first couple of decades of the 20th century here's the same sentiment expressed by the Marxist feminist Charnie Guettel in the 1970's- the heyday of 2nd wave radical feminism

"Of course equality in production is prerequisite to women's liberation... The causal chain is as follows "Maternity, Family absence from production, and public life, sexual inequality...Historical materialism holds that in a society founded on private property the class struggle is primary: racial, national, and sex contradictions are secondary. What this means in short is that sexism can not be explained without

reference to the dynamics of class, while an explanation of the broadest outlines of class dynamics does not require a theory of sex.”
(Charnie Guettel, Marxism and Feminism (Canadian Women’s Educational Press 1974) P.50)

If women just went to work and quit having so many babies they would be just as liberated as the male slaves trapped in the great industrial machine. The point here isn’t that the ability of women to find fair employment outside of the domestic realm is unimportant. Voltaire de Cleyre was adamant about the importance of economic independence to the fight for women’s liberation. The problem is that the Marxists were so tied to their unitary view of societal history and consciousness that they not only failed to pick up on the independent nuances of patriarchy that were tied to the psychological and cultural aspects of male domination, but they also failed to capture the dynamic and mutual causes, effects, and influences of the material and the ideational. Ideas have the power to generate human action. The results of those actions manifest themselves in the material world, which in turn, helps to shape consciousness of what is. The very notion of production, and the distribution of resources is cultural specific, its a construction of many component ideas that have developed over thousands of years. Human beings don’t simply react to social conditions, we have the capacity to shape them as well. Voltairine de Cleyre restated the one-sidedness of materialism in 1910

“Our modern teaching is that ideas are but attendant phenomena, impotent to determine the

actions or relations of life...It is thus that the so-called Materialist Conception of History, the modern socialists, and a positive majority of anarchist would have us look upon the world of ideas-shifting, unreal...having naught to do in the determination of Man's life, but so many mirror appearances of certain material relations, wholly powerless to act upon the course of material things...I think this unqualified determinism of the material is a great and lamentable error in our modern progressive movement." (Voltairine de Cleyre, The Dominant Idea (Mother Earth 5, nos. 3-4 May-June 1910) P.80-81)

Emma Goldman's view was substantially the same. To the Marxists

"...man is a mere puppet in the hands of that metaphysical Almighty called economic determinism or, more vulgarly, the class struggle. Man's will, individual and collective, his psychic life and mental orientation count for almost nothing with our Marxist and do not affect his conception of human history." (Red Emma Speaks, P.99)

She gets clear,

"No intelligent student will deny the importance of the economic factor in the social growth and development of mankind.

But only narrow and willful dogmatism can persist in remaining blind to the important role played by an idea as conceived by the imagination and aspirations of the individual." (ibid P.99)

As indicated above, the rejection of strict materialism did not lead to a denial of the importance of the class struggle or a wholesale rejection of the influence that the material conditions in society has in shaping the historical and political consciousness of the people. But there was an attempt, not always successful, to resist the temptation to a set up a hierarchy of oppressions. The emphasis among anarcha- feminism on domestic relations, spiritualism, free love, and bodily autonomy were regularly dismissed as liberal bourgeois due to this need on the part of the class warriors to assert the primacy of the class struggle over control of production and resources. This crucial mistake was repeated in the manner in which the class warriors addressed the race 'question' as well. Due in large part to the rise in the prominence of identity politics, the revival of Gramsci and his concept of 'cultural hegemony,' over the last 40 years some Marxists have taken the edge off of their insistence that all other oppressions have economic roots. But many still believe that a rejection of materialism is a rejection of revolutionary leftism as such.

Capital Feminism

There are real dangers in a unitary view of social oppression. Strict materialists suppose that after the overthrow of capitalism social hierarchy will vanish and with it all impediments to social inequality. But as we've seen in the 20th century even regimes dedicated to egalitarian economic ideals can play host to mammoth social inequalities, and repression. The inverse is true as well. Feminists who call for bodily liberation without also challenging global corporate capitalism fail to recognize the prominent role that gender commodity exchange plays in the stabilization of gender and sexual stratification. In other words, corporate feudalism and "free" sexuality maybe compatible but corporate feudalism and sexual liberation are not.

One of the more provocative voices for free sexuality is Philadelphia School of the Arts Professor Camille Paglia. In the early 1990's she made the papers by attacking the feminist establishment for its "pollyannaish" view of sexual relations and its WASP, stilted manner and aesthetics. Claiming to be the true bearer of 1960's radical feminism she wrote

"I want a revamped feminism... My generation of Sixties rebels wanted to smash the bourgeois codes That becomes authoritarian totems of the fifties. The 'nice' girl with her soft, sanitized speech And decorous manners had to go. Thirty years Later were still stuck with her- in the official Spokesmen and anointed heiresses of the feminist

Establishment." (Camille Paglia, *Vamps & Tramps*
(New York: Vintage Books 1994) P.IX)

Sounds right. She also claims to share the anarcho-feminist rejection of state control of over our bodies. "My libertarian position is that in the absence of physical violence, sexual conduct cannot and must not be legislated from above, that all intrusion by authority figures into sex is totalitarian." *Ibid.* P. 23 But beyond these commonalties Paglia's interpretation of sexual relations and feminism leaves little for radical individualists to identify with. Her insistence that physical abuse against women is "sodomasochistic on both sides" and her dismissal of affirmative action for women and colored people indicates an easy willingness to forget the centuries of nuptial and chattel slavery, and current discrimination against women and people of color. On the former, her attitude about rape is a classic blame the victim response to violence against women. Her rejection of proactive legal remedies for discrimination in education and the work place echo's the right's disregard of social justice and suffering. It should be remembered that affirmative action was not implemented simply because the downtrodden of society needed a boost. It was implemented as a response to past discrimination and a safeguard against on going sexism, and racism. It's a pay back, not a privilege.

Paglia should be Murry Bookchin's target. Her view is the de Sadian sexual revolution of the bourgeois. Gender stratification remains while the market absorbs previously 'deviant' sexualities for corporate profit and popular sadistic gratification. The summer of love was nice but

Playboy represents real sexual liberation. Capitalism gives sex attraction a possessive property and individualizes its aim (the product) through commodification. One can take a stab at desire through consumption but it remains ungratified. Any Rand's Objectivist call for atheist capitalism greatly underestimated the markets need and capacity to create its own god, set of values and self propelling purpose. Desire is the real goddess of market society- not reason, not the lord.

Paglia's claim in Sexual Persona that industrial capitalism "produced liberalism and feminism" is embarrassingly ahistorical. It was the triumph of enlightenment liberalism in the 1700's and the notion of contract and property rights that paved the way for capitalism.

In America industrial capitalism developed almost parallel to modern feminism. The Seneca Falls conference was held in 1848. The type of techniques associated with industrial capitalism- mass production, Taylorism, and the rise of the investor class did not "produce" much of anything until well after the civil war.

The left has always recognized the capacity of capitalism to increase production and extend wealth to some. But it needs to exploit, and oppress even larger numbers of potential workers who must remain uneducated, jobless, and poor for the system to "work." The scandal is that capitalism's manufactured underclass goes without while the privilege continues their orgies of waste, consumption and destruction.

There are other aspects of commodity exchange that reveal a more direct relationship between capitalism and female oppression. Paglia's take on prostitution once again displays her unwillingness to take seriously the relationship between sex and capital exploitation.

She rightly takes to task those in the women's movement who uniformly view sex workers as victims or "sick, strung-out, addicts crouched on city stoops who turn tricks for drug money." Instead she stresses the strength, and independence of female prostitutes. But after that she continues "solicitation...should be treated exactly like the vending of any commercial product." *Ibid.* 59. The professor appears not at all bothered at the reductive nature of the exchange for the hooker, the "product." The anarchy-feminist concern about prostitution comes not from some moral objection to the exchange of sex for money. It comes from concern about gender stratification and how economic pressures make women and girls turn to prostitution for money. It also comes from a concern about how female prostitution feeds male entitlement and our need to feel in control of women sexually even if that means we have to pay for it.

The fact that men can get girls and women to do anything they request for the right price is a symptom of the social disease that ensues when there are massive gender based gaps in wealth and market values supersede all else in a society. People should not have to sell themselves in order to survive. Free labor means that people should have the ability to choose or at least negotiate the terms under which they work. These choices should be determined

by our interests, and talents, not external command. While it's true that not all women sex workers are miserable, self loathing drug addicts, neither are all of them the mature, knowing harlots in control of their sexuality that Paglia paints. Many are just scared girls using their bodies to survive. Paglia claims that all government interference with consensual sex relations is 'totalitarian' but under the legalization modal that she advocates the 'vending' of sex for pay would be subject to immense regulation and control by the state. The specter of further state registries, mandatory health screenings, check ups, and time, place, manner restrictions on sex workers, is not libertarian. On the other hand decriminalization gets the state out of the business of overseeing consensual sex between adults altogether.

The very reason why so many sex workers choose prostitution as an occupation is because of the autonomy, and freedom of movement it provides. Legalized sex work is simply a more integrated expression of market liberalism, and does little to enhance agency and choice for women beyond removing the most conspicuous aspects of state harassment and repression against women and girls.

Paglia's "philosophy" comes last. In case you're left wondering what ties all of these views together it's what might be called pagan naturalist. It is nature that determines gender and sexuality. In her 1990 opus *Sexual Personae* she wrote

"Freewill is stillborn in the red cells of our body, for there is no freewill in nature. Our

choices come to us pre-packaged and special delivery, molded by hands not our own." Camille Paglia *Sexual Personae* (New York: Vintage Books 1990) P.7

In her essay No Law in the Arena she follows the lead of the Christen right by viewing AIDS as judgment, not by god but by nature.

"What AIDS shows us is nature itself, risen up with terrible force to mock our delusions of knowledge and control. AIDS, above all forces nature back onto the agenda of sex theory." (Vamps & Tramps, P.20)

Its Paglia's views that represent the essentialism that Bonnie Hadland and Jeffery Weeks object to. For her nature is "supreme" its meaning 'obvious.' Whether it ever occurred to her that there could be different, equally plausible interpretations of nature is unclear. What is clear is that the undercurrent of this essentialism can be felt when Paglia invokes gender and race.

She informs us that "women are not in control of their bodies; nature is," and claims females are "genetically more empathic," with "hypersensitive thinner skin" than men. *Ibid.* 30. This is the same essentialism that cultural traditionalists have deployed against women for centuries to support the notion that their status in society was a consequence of their natural interests and tendencies rather than of domination.

If gender really is a faithful reproduction of nature and its will than our attempts at emancipation are conspiracies against a force that is beyond rationalization. The struggle for female agency becomes a Sisyphean vanity. Those who purpose to transgress against that which nature has decreed themselves become specters of the unnatural, abnormal, deviate. In this most important aspect, Paglia's naturalism is made of the same substance of the cultural right- if in a different form. The "truth" about our sexuality, and our bodies always lays beyond us in a force always greater and more absolute than our own. And even if Paglia occasionally supports going to battle with nature armed with the instruments of modern medical science to enable the further absorption of women into the mainstream of market society, her belief that in the end 'nature will have the last laugh' reminds us that her basic concern is not social liberation but integration.

Paglia's observations on race are also problematic. She appears to like Black people- our music, our mannerisms, and expressiveness. It's our politics and movements for freedom that she opposes. Paglia takes the classic libertarian view on race. She has written against affirmative action, hate speech codes on campuses, and black studies to name a few issues. For example, over half of the index entries for African Americans in her book *Vamps and Tramps* reference the influence of black music. This duality is reminiscent of the antebellum southern planters who "loved the niggra" but were against all this talk about freedom, and rights. Paglia's wholesale rejection of the contemporary civil rights agenda while lauding black singing and dancing indicates a willingness

to trivialize the Black American experience. While our art has given us inspiration and has served as a way to communicate with one another and the world, it's never been a substitute for the concrete challenges and struggles we have waged against white supremacy and social inequality. This is our greatest American legacy, not our singing and dancing.

Paglia's fundamentalist naturalism fails to grapple convincingly with the complexities of the relationship between sex, power and our bodies. Paglia's bombast would be funny, even endearing were it not under-girded by a voice so stentorian, so cock sure and vehement. But alas that's all a part of her show.

While Paglia claims to be the true torch bearer of the feminist sexual liberation movement of the 1960's, others who came out of that period and movement are the real protectors of its flame. Ellen Willis, the late anti-authoritarian feminist, stood for and defended the legacy of the sexual liberation movement of the 1960's and 1970's while others ran from the ideological onslaught of the cultural right in the 80's and 90's. In the pages of the journal Dissent she defended the sex positive ethos of the radical feminists a generation earlier against the attacks from family values conservatives, and third wave feminist professors and advocacy groups who took date rape, stalking, and sexual harassment to the top of the movement's agenda to the exclusion of other, more libertarian concerns. Other pro-sex feminists who have been fighting to protect and expand the cultural victories of

the 1960's and 70's include Anne Sprinkel, Alice Echols, and Karen Finley.

The Contemporary Period

Stories from the Establishment

One of the most outspoken radical individualists over the last few decades has been former Surgeon General Jocelyn Elders. She spoke out bluntly in favor of reproductive freedom, physician assisted suicide, medical marijuana and harm reduction with regard to drug use and sex work. She also spoke honestly about masturbation. This last indiscretion was, naturally, the thing that did her in.

The liberal establishment never liked her views or the way that she put them. When talking off the cuff about the anti-abortion movement Elders quipped that some needed to "get over their love affair with the fetus." Naomi Wolfe, the quintessential "responsible" third wave feminist, called her out for being "particularly brutal" to those who would turn women and girls into incubators. What can be more brutal than a botched abortion? (Naomi Wolfe, *Our Bodies, Our Souls* (The New Republic: October 1995))

When Elders suggested in December 1993 that drug legalization might reduce violent crime and that the subject was worthy of study, Bill Clinton immediately (30 minutes after the remark) disavowed the comments from the Surgeon General and stated his opposition to any debate on the issue.

No dialogue, no study, no free exchange of information, no nothing. Just shut up and follow our fascist drug war- including you good doctor. Not exactly what Mill had in mind when he defended free speech over 150 years ago.

The liberal political establishment was quiet when conservatives picked up their call for her to be fired due to the remarks. When it became clear that Elders was not going to receive any political cover or support from the Black Congressional Caucus or other powerful progressive political organizations with influence in Washington, the right knew they'd be able to force her out- sooner or later.

In late 1994 she dared to talk openly about masturbation at a UN conference on AIDS as a pro-active harm reduction strategy and reasonable alternative to intercourse that youth should be informed about in sex education classes. Her actual words were a courageous attempt to broach a taboo topic that, due to the shame masturbation invokes in the US, makes open communication more difficult for young people trying to negotiate the minefield of sexuality. When asked if "Masturbation might be taught as a way to prevent AIDS?" Elders replied: "masturbation is something that is a part of human sexuality, and is a part of something that perhaps should be taught." Sometimes the obvious has to be stated. If Clinton had taken some time

learning how to explore his auto sexuality he might have accomplished something in the last two years of his presidency beyond bombing baby milk factories in Africa. If school for minors is going to be compulsory maybe a course in masturbation should be as well.

Clinton fired his Surgeon General the next day. Leon Panetta, the president's Chief of Staff read the pink slip to the press

"The President today asked for and received the resignation of Dr. Jocelyn Elders,...there have been too many areas in which the President does not agree with her views. The last step came to our attention late yesterday. There was a statement made at the United Nations World AIDS Day Conference in which -- in response to a question, she stated that schools should consider teaching masturbation. The President feels that's wrong." <http://www.clintonpresidentialcenter.org>

The silence from liberal individualists was deafening. It's easy to understand, if not excuse, Clinton's actions. The ultimate political opportunist took an opportunity to score political points with center- white voters by using a Black women to demonstrate that he's no race traitor. Before Elders it was Sista Soldier and Lani Gunier. Elder's was an outspoken Black women who did not confuse supporting the president's policies with thinking for herself and speaking her mind. For that she was fired.

The liberal intellegencia in places like the Washington Post and the Brookings Institute had nothing important to lose by standing by Elders. This suggests that it was her views that lead to her estrangement from Washington Democrats. In this case the most high level political official in years to call for a reexamination of the drug war and sex education in an era of mass incarceration and AIDS was betrayed by liberal individualists with silence.

Liberals have a difficult time coming to terms with what a consistent defense of individual freedom looks like. If it's not tied to property than, it is to be, at best, tolerated, and, if at all possible, banned. Doesn't sound like a text book liberal society? Remember that the US has more people behind bars than any other nation in the world. Hundreds of thousands of these prisoners are lock up for non-violent drug crimes.

Another recent example of liberal hypocrisy around individualism concerned the falsely accused scientist Wen Ho Lee. By any definition, liberal individualists would reject racial profiling because it takes one characteristic, race, attributes a set of negative and criminal traits to everyone of that race and subjects the group to surveillance, searches and arrest out of proportion to their numbers. For poor and working class black and brown people this means being stopped, arrested, convicted and incarcerated at higher rates than others due to their skin color. But the Lee case reminds us that even professionals can get caught in the racial dragnet.

Wen Ho Lee was a naturalized Taiwanese American citizen with a PhD in engineering from Texas A&M University. He had been working at the University of California's Los Alamos National Laboratory as a nuclear scientist for decades when he was accused of handing secrets about a weapons system to the Chinese in the Spring of 1999 and fired from his job.

After an initial investigation proved Lee innocent, lawyers for the Department of Energy and the FBI decided to double down. They conducted a computer forensics investigation and found nothing. They had Lee take a lie detector test. He passed but the government rejected the results. Ignoring all evidence to the contrary, the FBI arrested Lee for improperly downloading and transferring classified data from secure computers. If convicted, Lee could have spent the rest of his life in prison. He ended up spending 278 days in solitary confinement.

When the Government's case against Lee started unraveling, Lee struck a deal to plead guilty to only one count of improperly transferring data. In return the Government dropped the 58 counts of espionage against Lee. James A Parker, the Federal Judge hearing the case, felt compelled to personally apologize to Lee for the Government's abuse of power.

Clinton's FBI demonstrated a double standard in the investigations and enforcement of its own rules managing nuclear secrets. In 2000 John Deutch, the head of the CIA in the late 1990's, also was caught downloading classified materials to insecure computers. He never served a day in jail. In fact, he was pardoned by Clinton on his last day

in office. Sandy Burger, the National Security Advisor under Clinton, mishandled classified information as well. He paid a fine. Why did the Government choose Lee to investigate, arrest and throw in jail for infractions that many of others had committed? Because at a time when fear over China's rise and what it might mean for U.S. world hegemony in the aftermath of the Cold War, Lee represented an attractive scapegoat. As Howard University School of Law Professor Frank Wu pointed out in a September 2000 article on the case

"The reasons officials singled out Lee are shameful. Robert Vrooman, the former security chief at Los Alamos and an ex-CIA officer, played a leading role in the investigations. He is one of several officials who have come forward to admit that Lee, whose wife was a FBI informant, was targeted because of his racial background."

<http://speakout.com/activism/opinions/4613-1.html>

Of all of the pretensions of liberal individualism, its claim to individual justice is perhaps the most deceitful. The on going racial disparities in criminal justice systems in most liberal societies stand as evidence that social stereotyping and prejudice are the norms under liberal regimes that equate freedom with property rights instead of with social justice and selfhood.

Riot Grrrls

Only a hand full of movements have been successful in providing the social/ political framework for a whole subculture. Punk has always been animated by both a commitment to self-autonomy and a communal ethic exemplified by collectives like DC 'S Positive Force and music groups like Fuguzi. The synthesis of these two tendencies first developed with the anarcha- feminists in the late 19th century. Victoria Woodhull was among the first anarchists to argue for personal freedom and an end to capitalist, for profit, exploitation. (She later went on to become a stockbroker).

Emma Goldman wrote about how social conformity served the cultural needs of capital stability at a time when many other anti-authoritarians dismissed these type of concerns as bourgeoisie or liberal. She emphasized the importance of individuality to combat the growth of "mass society."

"The wholesale mechanization of modern life has increased uniformity a thousand fold. It is everywhere present, in habits, tastes, dress, thoughts and ideas. Its most concentrated dullness is a 'public opinion.' Few have the courage to stand out against it. He who refuses to submit is at once labeled "queer," different and decried as a disturbing element in the comfortable stagnancy of modern life." (Red Emma Speaks, P. 93)

Marginals can relate to the above passage. We've had fight for the right to express ourselves in our own way and think for ourselves. The attempts by school administrators and bosses to force us to conform is what has fed our resentment of authority and desire to smash it.

Many punks have also rejected corporate capitalism and its exploitation and oppression of women, workers, and people of color. Social hierarchies are built into the very dynamics of liberal market society and serves to perpetuate economic inequality. Craig O'Hare, author of the Philosophy of Punk put it this way "capitalism, as far as its basis lies in the dehumanization and exploitation of people (animals/plants) for wealth, can not be accepted by anarchists."

The sad irony about the development of punk is that although much of its 'philosophy' was created in the early days of anarcha-feminist agitation the movement has also produced overtly misogynistic music. Records like the 1986 Black Flag release "Slip it in" instructed boys to "slip it on in" after the girls "say they don't want it." And how many girls and women have stayed away from shows because of jocks with mohawks who enjoy knocking people on their asses who are smaller than they are?

The upshot of this is that it was this sexism in punk that helped to spawn the riot grrrl movement which, in a very real way, is in the process of reclaim punk's feminist, anti-authoritarian roots. Spawned out of the vibrant punk rock scenes of Washington D.C. and Washington State in the early 1980's, this loosely knit band of rockers, zine

writers, sex workers, and activists were the real rebellion that everyone was waiting to come from the academy. But unlike the women studies majors who stayed up late studying abstruse "post" feminist French theories, these women and girls were busy creating a new sub-culture that stressed the importance of developing spaces where females could perform, and share their experiences with each other without the muscle flexing mosh pit atmosphere of traditional punk shows.

These spaces weren't the consciousness rising gatherings of the 70's post counter-culture either. The music and writing that the movement produced was angry, direct, viscerally expressive. Kim Gordon of Sonic Youth provided much of the initial inspiration for the Riot Grrrl movement with her pale, sharp, screech and sex positive feminism. Lyrics like "support the power of women, use the power of men, use the word fuck, the word is love" off the 1983 album *Confusion is Sex* created a stir in punk circles. Gordon was later instrumental in starting and promoting other Riot Grrrl bands like the Lunachicks and Hole.

Riot Grrrl bands like Babes in Toyland promoted Girl Power (in all of its appropriated current pink disney pop manifestations) with Cinderella big shoes, exaggerated make-up and puff dress. It challenged the gender association of femininity with weakness and modesty. You didn't have to copy the drab, understated, unisex style of many Ivy League/ Seven Sister feminists to challenge male supremacy. You could wear a dress, put lip-stick on, put on combat boots, speak up about your life and experiences and be just as powerful as any boy or man on the planet. It was

also about the reclamation of girlhood. In the winter 2000 issue of Bust magazine, the former lead singer for Bikini Kill, Kathleen Hanna talked with Gloria Steinem and Celina Hex about the politics of the aesthetic.

“For me some of the youth oriented stuff of dressing like a little girl, was also about women who had to numb out most of their childhood due to sexual abuse...and saying ‘I deserve to have a childhood and I didn’t have it.’ It was also just about being freaks, being punk rockers, being people who are oppositional to the whole American system, and not wanting to look like adults and our parents who we saw fucking up the world.” Celina Hex, “*Fierce Funny, Feminists*” Bust (Winter 2000) Vol.16 P. 52

Hanna described her vision of feminism as a “broad-based political movement that’s bent on challenging hierarchies of all kinds in our society, including racism, and classism, and able-body-ism.” (*Ibid.*) She spoke out against some in the feminist establishment for their stand against porn and their collusion with police and state agents who harass sex workers. Of course Steinem defended the anti-porn stance and claimed Andrea Dworkin was “misunderstood.”

The Riot Grrrl emphasis on bodily autonomy was apparent from its earliest inception. A 1991 quote by Ne Tantilho from the Washington D.C. zine Riot Grrl explained

“I should feel comfortable to carry myself as I

please, where I please, and when I please...I will project the strength and anger I feel...I am not pleased to have my sex ridiculed, to be seen as an item, not a free thinking being. I am not 'asking for it' by existing in a space that is rightfully mine, the world ." (Ne Tantillo, *Riot Grrrl*, (1991) P.3)

This brings us back to an issue larger than sexual liberation. Bodily self- determination and having the social power to make choices about how you live your life are the basis of selfhood. This is the autonomy that Riot Girl punk and the broader radical individualists movement have embraced.

Despite rumors of the "dissipation" of the Riot Grrrl movement (the authors of the third wave feminist primer *Manifesta* got that wrong) it keeps producing bands, literature, and activism. After a flurry of national mainstream press in the early 1990's many of its adherents decided to remain independent and underground instead of turning into media darlings of the corporate press. The U.S. continues to have a vibrant Riot Grrrl scene with bands Bratmobile, Sleater Kinney and festivals like Ladyfest, a five day Riot Grrrl art and music gathering.

Queer Theory

A big influence on Riot Grrrl scenes in the early 1990's was queer theory. Developed by thinkers like, Judith Butler, and David Halprin, its strategy was to question the politically popular notion in the homosexual rights

movement of a genetic link between sex attraction and gender. One didn't choose to be gay or lesbian (why would anyone *choose* that) It was hard wired into the genes. Queer theory sought to pull the sex debate out from under the biological determinism of progressive medical science and stressed the fluidity and fragmented nature of sex identities.

This approach was informed by French post structuralist thinking and its call for a re-examination of the very notion of gender identity itself. Masculine and feminine are social constructs and correspond not to biological sex or nature but to power. Queer theory encourages us to move away from binary notions of gender and recognize the many genders that have been marginalized and stamped deviant over the centuries.

The Queer movement has been doing more than just theorizing however. It has been at the forefront of sex activism and organizing. Groups like Queer nation, Queer to the Left, and Gay Shame, have been challenging the commodification of the lesbian, gay, bi, and trans "lifestyle", and have been making public displays of affection into a political issue with kiss ins, and more daring direct sex actions.

Taking its lead from the male homosexual sex scenes of the 70's, current activists have refused to hide their sexuality in the closet or, for that matter, in the indoors. Public copulation and eroticism, once seen as the gratuitous behavior of over-sexed gay men, has now become one of the most direct challenges to the domination of the social sphere by the agents of state order.

Trouble in Paradise

All the little American Police States

More people are beginning to ask the question with a straight face- are we *really* living in a police state now? Those responsible liberals who indulge us crazies enough to respond usually begin their reply with the phrase; Well, no but...

The keyword in the question is we. There are lots of Americas in America. Some neighborhoods certainly are police states now and have been for sometime. Middle class, suburban, white Americans usually don't live in these neighborhoods. And the reason why the vast majority of them don't blink when folks whisper about creeping fascism is because they believe their white privilege will save them from the night- stick and concentration camps.

I was disabused of this myth when I turned on the T.V. one sunny spring afternoon in 1992 and saw the Branch Davidian compound in flames. Racial solidarity between white elites, their representatives in the political class, and the white masses isn't worth a plug nickel when one considers the huge class divide between whites who begin being groomed for power and rule when they enter the first grade and their poor and working class white sisters and brothers who are in the embarrassing social position of being exploited, despised, and forgotten in a country that's overwhelming run by "their people."

But there are good reasons to apply the term police state to the U.S. even though every community might not be living under the jack- boot of fascist rule.

One reason is that since 1980 the attacks on due process and civil liberties in the name of crime fighting, the ascendancy of the executive and the weakening of the Congress, and the criminalization and marginalization of dissent has continued to increase unabated by the courts, popular outcry or electoral fixes. This coupled with the post 911 expansion of federal, state and corporate sponsored surveillance, and the pronouncement of the classical fascist 'permanent war' doctrine by the current administration in its war on terror is convincing evidence that everyone's freedom and access to justice has been greatly diminished. As Vice President Dick Cheney stated in October of 2001, the war on terror "is different than the Gulf War was, in the sense *that it may never end*. At least, not in our lifetime."

But a more important reason to use all the little American police states as a synecdoche for the whole country is because the whole country is morally and politically implicated in what goes on in every dark inner city alley between the cops and the people every night. The support for (or denial of) the many police states in the U.S. by people who, by the grace of birth, happen to not have to deal with being spied on and beaten by cops on a regular basis is the most prominent aspect of the current discourse on white supremacy and police brutality in this country. Yes, all of America is and will continue to be a police state until the last local regime of terror is smashed along with the last law that legalizes that terror.

Often what's missing from the 'U.S. is a police state' declaration by leftists is context. An ever present danger in using words like Nazi and fascist to describe contemporary America is that by doing so you risk diminishing the suffering of people who get thrown in prisons for holding unpopular views or killed for speaking out of against injustice. These things do happen here. But they happen with more frequency and ferocity in places like Columbia, Palestine, Thailand and other countries. This means that domestic denunciations of the domestic security state often sound alarmist. We can pick up the paper and read about repression going on in the world that makes most of what goes on in the U.S. look mild by comparison.

But using comparison as the sole frame of analysis always leaves the authoritarians with wiggle room to ratchet up their repression so long as they can point to some other regime that's worse than they are. Part of the role of writers, artists, and intellectuals is to remind people of the ideal and the vision of what freedom and justice looks like. By dreaming out loud we remind people that "another world is possible." Before people will fight for change they have to believe that that change is worth fighting for.

A Dissent from Decency

Some Supreme Court decisions deserve to be unanimous. Like *Brown v. Board of Education*, the case that invalidated the separate but equal doctrine from *Plessy v. Ferguson* or the unanimous court decision in 1973 that forced Nixon to hand over the Watergate tapes to a special prosecutor investigating his attempt to cover up a pretty larceny. The Summer 2003 case *Lawrence v. Texas* is another one that should have been decided unanimously. Unfortunately with right-wingers like Scalia, Thomas, and Rehnquist on the bench even the most powerful court in the land can't speak with one voice on sexual privacy rights.

John Lawrence and Tyron Garner were at Lawrence's apartment in September 1998 when Houston police broke into his place in response to a false report of an armed intruder. Once inside they found Lawrence having sex with Tyron Garner and jailed both men under a state law banning sex between consenting adults of the same gender. The case went up to the Texas Supreme Court which relied on *Bowers v. Hardwick*, a 1986 Supreme Court decision that upheld an anti-sodomy law in Georgia, to justify sustaining the sodomy convictions. If this all sounds pretty fascist you have good ears.

But apparently Antonia Scalia has no problem giving due deference to Texas fascists so long as their fascism is "reasonably related" to a legitimate state interests- in this case punishing interracial Gay couples with fines and jail time. In his dissent from the six to three decision in favor of Lawrence he claimed that the overturning of *Bower's* was a "massive disruption of the current social

order." Why? Well, because a whole bunch of states have relied on the 1986 Bowers's decision to codify anti-homosexual bigotry and now all those laws have been invalidated.

Scalia believes that as long as a state can demonstrate that a law banning consensual sexual activity is reasonably related to a legitimate state interest, a less exacting Equal Protection test than the "strict scrutiny" criterion, than it passes constitutional muster. For him it is clear enough. "Certain sexual behavior is 'immoral and unacceptable'" and in his mind and the minds of thousands of state and local authoritarians the country over this fact alone "constitutes a rational basis for regulation."

But he has it backward. Even with the "rationally related" test the burden is on the State to demonstrate why it's singling out a particular class of people for punishment. Absent this demonstration the presumption is that the State does not have the authority to single out one class of people for punishment and repression. In this case we start with the assumption that what consenting adults do sexual in the privacy of their own home is their own business. The State simply does not have a legitimate state interest in preventing two consenting adults of the same sex from engaging in sexual contact in their own homes. The desire to enforce a strict code of Christian morality on the whole community, many of whom may not be Christian, the court found, was not a legitimate state interest. The question isn't whether there is some constitutional right to engage in homosexual activity. It's what legitimate authority does the State have to forbid same sex activity in the absence

of any evidence that the prohibition is even remotely related to anything that resembles a "legitimate" state function or responsibility. The court answer? Zero. I agree.

Cop- Jacking and the Campaign Against Working Class Motorists

As if poor and working class people didn't have enough obstacles in their path to survival, the cost of Bay Area transportation has increasingly become prohibitive for folks who need to commute in order to work, and secure affordable shelter. While public transportation systems continue to increase fares and slash student and senior discounts, Sacramento politicians pressured by anti-car activists and deep deficits, have raised toll charges, and registration and license fees making it more difficult for low and moderate income motorists to get and keep their cars on the road legally. Transportation engineers figure the more expensive it is to drive the more people will turn to public transportation- better for the environment and better for regional public transportation coffers. But with systems like Bart, AC Transit, and Caltrans raising fares and cutting routes, working people are finding it harder to get where they need to go in order to work and live independently.

Regional public transportation managers and Sacramento politicians aren't the only state agents of class war in the struggle over affordable transportation. The Oakland Police Department, along with the help of the Alameda County Sheriff's Department and the California Highway Patrol, is at the forefront of the attack on poor and working class motorists. As Sitara Nieves, the national development organizer of Critical Resistance, stated in an interview in Bay Area Political Review, the program "Operation Impact" targets East Oakland drivers for car seizures and arrests in their crack down on violent drug

and gang activity. They go after East Oakland (therefore black and brown) drivers with older cars with bad paint jobs and broken head or taillights or expired tags. In other words, the type of cars that poor and working class folks often drive. They choose gas over \$220.00 turn signal repairs. A reasonable choice.

This focus, the OPD claims, is preventative and is based on the now popular criminal justice theory that if you bust people for minor infractions of the law it will prevent larger crimes from taking place. In a February 6, 2004 press conference the OPD hailed their CHP partnership in "curtailing potential precursors to violence: ie disorderly conduct, reckless driving...vandalism...and loitering." A press release claimed that the reduction in "calls for service" over 2003 was a result of this over policing in the East Oakland area.

Of course there's no evidence for the proposition that if you take someone's car for playing their music too loud (an almost regular occurrence according to cop watchers in East Oakland) that they're less likely to commit rape, murder or assault. In fact, taking someone's sole means of transportation can leave them with few options beyond hanging out in the hood and waiting for something to happen...

As public transportation grows increasingly out of reach for the poor and working class due to rate hikes and route eliminations, old, cheap used cars are sometimes the best prospect for a family that needs to get back and forth to work, school, day care, etc. The fact that the OPD has

spent over one million dollars last year cop- jacking and arresting motorists in Oakland in its Operation Impact campaign is yet another example of how successful Jerry Brown has been at rearranging the city's public safety priorities around his goal to move 10, 000 yuppies into Oakland and expel the poor and working class.

Connerly's Prop 54 Bad for California

'Don't ask don't tell', Bill Clinton's attempt to placate anti-lesbian and gay bigots in the military by silencing homosexuals in exchange for their right to serve, appears to be alive and well. Except this time its people of color who are being told that silence is the price we must pay for social equity and equal rights. What does Ward Connerly, the main sponsor of the Racial Privacy Initiative prop. 54, have to offer communities of color in return for our silence? Well, a utopia of course. A place where, in the words of Connerly, 'all that matters is our character' and we're all 'part of one human family' instead of 'a racial or ethnic coalition.' Sounds good. But like all utopias, problems come up the minute you throw into the mix real people with social biases and disparate levels of power.

What Californian's are more likely to receive in exchange for passing the state information ban on collecting racial data is ignorance. Ignorance of the persistent disparities between whites and communities of color in economic status, education and health. Ignorance of how environmental hazards disproportionately effect poor neighborhoods where non-whites live. Ignorance of the many ways in which California's criminal justice system singles out youth of color for harsher punishment than their white counterparts. Ultimately, prop 54 won't end discrimination it will only enable it to flourish by allowing structural racism to go undetected. The information ban would encourage us to ignore the effects of discrimination by making proof of its existence invisible. This won't end racism but it will

sweep it under the rug for those with the privilege to pretend it doesn't exist.

Deanomite!

I'm glad Howard Dean wasn't the chair of the Democrat National Committee when I was becoming politically conscious. His sharp running commentary of the culture and politics of the Republican Party might have convinced me that although the Democrats were corporate controlled and not much different from the Republican Party, just maybe, there was some hope for the party. Well, 20 years later I know better. But I must admit watching Democrat leaders squirm while the former 2004 presidential candidate goes around the country committing truth about the Republicans is amusing.

What got Howard Dean into trouble this time was his accurate comment that Republicans "all behave the same. They all look the same. It's pretty much a white Christian party..." Now, a major theme in right-wing culture war politics is the "balkanization of America." For 20 years Republicans have been decrying America's growing multiculturalism and condemning liberal efforts to accommodate and celebrate it. Republicans have always been proud of the monoculture and conformity of their party. When a Democrat has the temerity to point it out all of a sudden they want us to believe the party looks like a Benneton commercial?

The Republican Party is 82 percent white and Christian according to a recent CNN, USA Today, Gallup Poll. Dean's point was simple. In a country that is so diverse racially and religiously the fact that the Republicans overwhelmingly appeal to only one race and religion is pathetic and indicates a culture of exclusivity. Nancy

Pelosi was so offended by Dean's comment she felt compelled to distance herself. But it's unclear what the House Democratic leader doesn't agree with. Is she denying that the Republicans are overwhelmingly white? Is she denying that the Republicans are overwhelmingly Christian? Is she denying that they all look the same? And if she is, she should take a month and catch the Sunday morning political talk shows. The Republicans she'll see and hear will be old, White men in business suits and American flags on their lapels. Maybe Representative Pelosi is just in denial.

But she's not the only one. Lady Die also took objection to Dean's comments. The senior Senator from California demanded that he "concentrate on raising funds and supporting Democrats and not on making outrageous statements." Representative Ellen Tauscher, a right-wing Democrat, claimed that Dean's "resort to pejorative personal attacks" (he said Tom Delay was evil and belonged in jail) were unnecessary "especially when we have the high ground." Well she's right about the high ground stuff. Democrats from Adlai Stevenson and Walter Mondale to Michael Dukakis, and John Kerry all felt really good about occupying the moral high ground next to Republicans who were concerned about more temporal stuff like winning elections and governing.

The most bizarre attacks on Dean have been over his supposed over the top liberalism. While he was governor of Vermont he came out in favor of the North American Free Trade Agreement, he came out against gun control, and chose to cut social programs in order to balance annual state

budgets rather than raising taxes on corporations or the wealthy. But in today's skewed political reality what's generally referred to as the "mainstream" is quite conservative. As Dean himself put it during the 2004 primaries "I think it's pathetic that I'm considered the left-wing liberal. It shows just how far to the right this country has lurched."

Essentially Dean is a corporate moderate with some progressive maverick tendencies and a penchant for being bold enough to tell ideological and political truths about the Republicans that most other Democrats are too scared to utter in public. This frightens the Democrat Party establishment. It should. It often takes years for established power to disintegrate after its effectiveness has petered out. The corporatists and political class hacks in control of the Democrat party may well continue to marginalize the grassroots of the party and anyone these grassroots voters are able to slip into leadership positions to speak for them. Meanwhile, the rest of us can sit back and watch the whole pathetic show.

Liberals Turn Victory into Defeat in Schiavo Case

On paper it may seem like the liberals have just won the latest round in the culture wars. Michael Schiavo finally was able to let his wife die. By an overwhelming margin the American people supported him and not Terry Schiavo's grandstanding mother and father who apparently felt that they should be allowed to overthrow years of settled family law that gives the spouse the authority to decide when costly, life sustaining medical provisions should be withdrawn from their partner. In this case the decision was made a lot easier by the fact that Terry Schiavo had verbally stated to numerous people her wish not to be kept alive were she to become a vegetable or comatose. In trial case after trial case 19 Florida judges looked at this testimony and determined that it was probative enough to establish that Mrs. Schiavo made her wishes clear on the subject. After 14 years in what doctors have called a "persistent vegetative state" Terry Schiavo died on March 31, 2005.

Furthermore, in poll after poll Americans expressed their rejection of the way the U.S. Congress inserted itself into what looked to most folks like a private matter. A majority of people in the U.S. still have a deep commitment to the belief that individuals should be able to control their own bodies. This belief in self-autonomy is why abortion rights, and the right to die are still supported by majorities. Right-wing activists and organizations have every right to try to persuade people to abstain from self-regarding acts that they consider sins or immoral. They

shouldn't be allowed to use the state to force their religious or cultural beliefs on the rest of us.

But if the Judges in the Schiavo case showed courage in resisting an imperial Congress and the people showed good sense in seeing through all the conservative bullshit about supporting a "culture of life" (even as they sponsor death in Iraq) why does this victory feel like a defeat? Well, because it is. Like the Operation Rescue anti-abortion siege in Wichita, Kansas back in 1991 that shut down the city for weeks, the point in the Schiavo case for the culture warriors wasn't necessarily to keep Terry Schiavo alive. It was to create a social flashpoint, a confrontation that crystallized certain symbols and themes and players in the struggle over the culture.

In a society as big as ours majorities mean very little. A majority of Americans may never agree with the Christian fanatics and their views on most issues. But even a majority of the electorate isn't needed to stabilize a particular social order. Well organized minorities make change and are the forces that influence the attitudes of majorities. In this case the right was able to mobilize its core of committed shock troops to dramatize a political divide that they hope will stick in the hearts and minds of the populous- the "cultural of life" vs. the "cultural of death," arrogant liberal judges vs. morally courageous representatives of the people willing to buck the polls in order to save one life. Committed non-violent activists in Florida vs. morally ambiguous Democrat Party liberals who couldn't even find the time to come back to Washington and

vote to save Terry Schiavo or stand up and say clearly why they wouldn't.

With the exception of Representative Barney Frank and a small hand full of relatively obscure Florida Democrats, liberals, like usual on cultural issues, were in hiding. The liberal mantra on the culture war is that it's a "diversion" that Republicans use so the people won't think about the things the liberals think they should be thinking about- health care, the minimum wage, and other bread and butter issues. Because liberals are so terrified by social and cultural issues, even when huge majorities agree with their position they 're busy trying to change the subject to Social Security instead of capitalizing on an opportunity to use a social confrontation to demonstrate how over the top and extreme the cultural fascists have become.

The ethical center of the Schiavo case rests with belief that your body is the most intimate domain of your freedom. If you don't have the right to control your body than you don't have the core substance of freedom- selfhood. When for whatever reason a person doesn't have the capacity to make important decisions about their own body (medical incapacitation, they're a minor, etc.) than the family is the next social formation given this responsibility and authority. The decision-making power moves outward from the most intimate level of competent authority to the broadest. (which, in the Schiavo case, was Congress). The national state is the last social institution a free people looks to to make these personal decisions because it is the furthest removed from people and their everyday lives.

The liberals who did bother to debate the Schiavo case in the media did so not on ethical or even political grounds but on federal civil procedure. Barney Frank spent precious air time repeating that the Congress was "institutionally incompetent" to deal with the Schiavo case. Others focused on constitutional problems with Congress passing a law granting de novo federal review of a case that had been fairly adjudicated in Florida state courts. Molly Ivins stressed Congresses "arrogant a usurpation of power." Both points were true. But both failed to get at heart of what the confrontation was about.

Liberal spokespeople (the ones who didn't defect to the other side) should have let the lawyers talk about separation of powers and how important living wills were and focused instead on how the federal governments attempt to keep individuals from exercising control over their own bodies was a central part of the right's attack on personal freedom. They failed to frame the Schiavo case and the right-wings intimidation of Florida judges in the larger context of the attack on liberal professors (Ward Churchill), entertainers (Janet Jackson) and liberal journalists (Dan Rather). The Schiavo case is just one front in a coordinated cultural offensive. Our ability to connect the dots in these episodes will determine how successful we are in resisting this Christian fundamentalist cultural jihad. The fact that they were able to mobilize so much power in such a short period of time should make everyone concerned about their rise sit up and take notice.

Lessons in Revolutionary Anarchism: a talk by Joel Olson

Joel Olson, a former member of the 1990's anarchist organization Love and Rage and founding member of Bring the Ruckus gave an engaging and wide-ranging talk on revolutionary politics and practice at Centro Del Pueblo in San Francisco on March 17th 2005. The event was organized by the Catalyst Project and Study and Struggle and originally was scheduled to be at the Center for Political Education a block and a half up Valencia Street. The re-routing didn't seem to effect turnout though. About 50 to 60 folks showed up to hear what Olson had to say. A good crowd for a weeknight talk by most Bay Area standards.

Olson took about an hour to walk the crowd through his description of cadre organization principals, his days with Love and Rage, and the Race Traitor Journal, some impressions about the strategic roll of race in revolutionary practice in the U.S., his feelings on left sectarianism (he thinks too much is made of the theoretical differences between anarchists, Marxists, and other radical traditions) and his current work with Bring the Ruckus. Throughout he emphasized the central role that history, experience and strategy played in his revolutionary analysis while seeming to de-emphasis theory and book-based struggle. He also told some jokes and kept things conversational avoiding the trap of appearing too self-important.

Central to his presentation was his description of the role that race played in the political development of anarchist organizational priorities. He pointed out that "Love and

Rage was attacked and hated" while they sought to expand the political terrain of anarchist struggle to include anti-racism and feminist work in the early 1990's. Their rejection of class struggle fundamentalism put them at odds with many anarchist activists during the time. Olson also explained some the nuances around Race Traitor's racial analysis and talked about the limitations and failures of that project to inspire white activism against systemic white supremacy.

Towards the end of his talk he touched on the strategic importance of the struggle against white supremacy by describing the history of revolutionary struggle in the U.S. and the prominent role race has always played in it. Olson said the Arizona Cop- Watch and prison abolition projects of Bring the Ruckus were the focus of the organizations current work because both implicate the two main state institutions responsible for the maintenance of white supremacy- the cops and the prison system. After the talk he took questions for about 30 minutes. Folks were suppose to brake into groups and continue the conversation. I had to bounce. In all a very good talk by a committed revolutionary.

Return of the Morality Police

Imagine a city so eager to clean up vice that it decides to stage, costly, high profile stings against street prostitutes while it cuts 5 million from its parks and recreation programs to help fill a 32 million dollar deficit. If you need help forming a mental picture take a second to check out what the Oakland Police Department is doing to target vulnerable sex workers in the name of public safety.

In early 2003 the OPD was told by the Council to cut 6.4 million from its budget. The department said it would do so by cutting overtime and "severely curtailing" costly prostitution sting operations that do nothing but introduce poor, young females and trans-gendered sex workers into the county justice system where their given rap sheets, and assigned parolee officers. But the OPD June 3rd round up of over 34 women on prostitution charges indicates a change in priorities not because the department is in the black -last year the department overspent its budget by 10 million and is projected to over spend this years by 12.8 - but because there's an mayoral election coming up and the City Council President Ignacio De La Fuente needs a crusade.

His new decency campaign "Operation Shame" is a media/ law enforcement initiative to crackdown on street prostitution. It will feature Clear Channel donated billboards and bus signs with the faces of johns convicted of soliciting prostitutes in Oakland and will target streetwalkers for arrest. Arresting your way out of a prostitution hot spot is a lot like arresting your way out of open-air drug

markets. It disrupts the flow for a few weeks but the traffic always pops up somewhere else unless something is done to address the underlining economic and social issues that lead so many young people into this way of life. And shame for male johns? Please. These guys are pretty shameless as it is. Their wife and kids will be the ones who will be hurt and disgraced not them.

Apparently Oakland has adopted the Rudolph Guiliani approach to crime- go after the most venerable in the city- the young, the poor and working class, females and the trans-gendered people of color and target them for misdemeanors- sex work, pot possession, graffiti etc. This allegedly deters more serious crime. What it really does is guarantee that many of these people will become trapped in a cycle of arrest, conviction, incarceration, parole, surveillance, parole violation, arrest, incarceration that disrupts lives and makes getting and holding down jobs, apartments, and relationships next to impossible. Some say this "broken windows" theory has worked in places like New York in the 1990's but we should remember that violent crime went down in all major cities in the mid to late 1990's not just New York. San Francisco has always enjoyed lower violent crime than comparable cities of its size by focusing on prevention and going after serious crimes not by targeting populations involved in consensual vice crimes.

Operation shame is being marketed as attempt to crack down on pimps who recruit under aged girls into prostitution- a noble cause. But over 80% of the 800 prostitutes arrested last year were adult women. Of the 34 prostitutes arrested

on June 3rd eight were teenagers and one was 12. The OPD has not said whether the "teenagers" were adults (over 18) or juveniles. The 12 year old is news worthy because it's so rare.

Sadly, not only do these prostitution crack downs waste precious city dollars in an era of deficits, these arrests do nothing to help these girls transition out of sex work. Officer Turpin of the Special Victims Unit of the OPD was candied about it. After they arrested these young sex workers "we let them go back out in the streets or put them in juvenile hall...there is nothing in between." Rather than throwing money away arresting prostitutes in elaborate, resource consuming stings to help politicians with their campaign profiles maybe Oakland should be spending that money creating "in between" programs for young sex workers who want to get out of prostitution. That might be worth OPD deficit spending- not useless stings.

No rights we're bound to respect: the assault on the rights of sex offenders

The passage of Prop 83 is yet other example of how easy it is to whip up political hysteria in order to justify repression against unpopular minorities. By a 73% percent margin californians decided that sex "offenders" don't deserve the same rights that murderers, armed robbers and drug dealers have.

In culturally conservative eras social deviants always become the focus of heightened animosity and punishment. They become symbols of the unraveling of society's moral underbelly and the people who target them- politicians, vigilantes, reverends- become folk heroes for standing up for traditional values. In the 1950's it was the cigarette smoking, leather-clad delinquent on the corner, pot smoking Negroes in smoky jazz clubs, communist subversives and loose women. In the eighties drug users and addicts, welfare "queens" and young, male, inner city "super-predators" of color were the leading cultural demons. Over the last decade Americans have been in a panic over sex offenders who represent the most potentially destabilizing social deviancy of all- sexual chaos.

It's not surprising that politicians looking for an easy crusade to jump on have taken political advantage of this panic. Federal, state, and local municipalities have been able to pass draconian laws denying the most basic human and civil rights to convicted sex offenders in the hopes that once the courts uphold them these precedents can be applied to other cases involving suspected terrorists, drug

felons and other contemporary pariahs. This is part of the long-term conservative attack on the Bill of Rights that began in Nixon's law and order campaign against blacks and radicals in the late 1960's. Tom Delay's recent threats against so-called liberal activist judges who have the audacity to believe that the constitution applies to everyone is just the logical conclusion of this campaign. The fact that many liberals have been as just as eager as conservatives to join the legal assault against the human and constitutional rights of sex offenders is a testament to just how far conservatives have moved the cultural conversation to the right.

Much of the over the top response to sexual crime stems from the contemporary insecurity over the fragility of the historical bedrock institutions of patriarchy- the nuclear family and marriage. Both have been in decline in the U.S. over the last two generations. Conservatives imagine that their decline is due to liberal elite "assaults" on marriage and the family. I can't think of a single prominent liberal who has dared to question the "sanctity" of marriage and the family in the last 20 years. In truth, young people have increasingly either lost interest in conforming their personal lives to fit old and rigid domestic institutions or have chosen to redefine the parameters of these institutions to be more inclusive, and less male dominated.

The political reaction to this development has defined the last fifteen years of American public life. The term "sex offender" not only refers to the serial rapist and

pedophile. It also refers to the single mom, the gay, lesbian, bi and trans-gendered, even the celibate 40 year old. The disapproval and scorn that can't be expressed through prohibition is expressed in social shame, media ridicule, and off color "jokes" at office parties. These soft expressions of disapprobation around sexuality ensures that its powerful force is managed in ways that reinforce what conservatives believe is its teleological function- procreation. Sexual contact for pleasure, exploration, education- anything other than making babies- is somehow deviant. The sexual offender triggers these social sexual buttons like no other in our society.

Part of the success around the campaign to deny sex offenders their human rights lies with the ability of the right and their liberal supporters to take lies, myths and half truths about sex crime and pass them off as facts to fearful Americans. Some of the most popular beliefs about sex offenders gain traction because of our need to project on to them the causes for some perceived collapse of commonly shared values than any empirical truth. The best place to begin is with some facts.

The term sexual offender actually covers many different sex crimes the inclusion or exclusion of which depends on the legal definitions and categories in the state or locality in question. It can refer not only to violent rapists and adult pedophiles but also to voyeurs and exhibitionists, incest (adult and intergenerational), "crimes against nature" like necrophilia and bestiality, "lewd and lascivious behavior" (public sex, mooning, streaking, flashing) and the possession, or viewing of, obscenity and

child porn. (Prostitution is usually separated out of sex offense data although in some states like Louisiana prostitution is counted as a sex crime.) Speaking about sex offenders as a monolith allows cultural fascists and craven politicians to lump streakers in with rapist/ murders in their march to cleanse America from its sexual deviancy. New laws making it mandatory to report sex offense convictions to employers, landlords and home sellers means that not only do violent child molesters have to divulge whether they've been ever been convicted of a sex crime, it also means that Dick and Jane must divulge information about the night they got arrested for having sex in a park after coming home drunk from a neighborhood bar. Does your boss really need to know this type of shit?

*The big lie is that sex offenders recidivate at a higher rate than other criminal classes. According to the Washington Sentencing Guidelines Commission "Sex offenders re-offend at lower rates than those convicted of other felonies. After five years, 15% of sex offenders return to prison for new offenses compared to 43% of offenders convicted of property crimes." Numerous studies have demonstrated that sex offenders are the *lest* likely of all offender classes to re-offend within their criminal category. Another words, sex offenders are less likely to be re-arrested for another sex crime than a thief is to be re-arrested for a property crime or a drug criminal for a drug crime. Hanson and Bussiere (1998) reported an overall sex offender recidivism rate of 13 percent. Grumfeld and Noreik (1986) found a 10 percent recidivism rate for rapists. Gibbens, Soothill, and Way (1978) reported a four percent recidivism rate for incest offenders. In another*

Bureau of Justice Statistics study of recidivism it showed that recently released prisoners with the highest rates of re-arrest were robbers 70.2%, burglars 74%, larcenists 74.6%, and car thieves 78%. The lowest re-arrest rates were for homicide 40%, rape 46%, other sexual assault 41% and driving while under the influence 51.5%.

It's precisely this kind of hard data that the culture warriors love to ignore. "Statistics show that 95% of the time, anyone who molests a child will likely do it again," declared an Indiana senator proposing sex offender registration in that state. Ann Landers claimed "The only molesters who can be considered permanently cured are those who have been surgically castrated." A Florida senator referred to "sexual predators who start to look for their next victim as soon as they are released from prison," and a California legislator warned the public that sex offenders "will immediately commit this crime again at least 90 percent of the time." These are the people running things...

Another part of the "sexual offenders are coming to destroy western civilization" narrative is the insistence that they are multiplying and the problem is getting worse. Sex crimes especially against children started going down in the mid 1990's along with violent and property crime in general. According to an August 2005 USA Today story on sex crime hysteria "Government figures show the rate of sexual assaults against adolescents ages 12 to 17 plunged 79% from 1993 through 2003, and the number of substantiated sex-abuse cases involving kids of all ages fell 39% in the same

time period." As the number of sex crimes go down the alarm over them continues to increase.

It would be bad enough if all these misconceptions and lies about sex offenders *only* lead to individual violent attacks against them like the beating death of Anaheim California resident Nicholas Scollard in December of 1998, or the shooting death of a Catholic priest by Dante Stokes in Maryland in the 2001. (I could go on). But the combination of a sensational mainstream media that regularly turns what used to be local crime stories into national law and order reality news sagas, the steady drum beat of "get tough" right-wing ideologies and the liberal politicians dedicated to out doing them, has created a climate that has called the very human rights of sex offenders into question.

Mandatory Registration

In 1994 the Jacob Wetterling Crimes Against Children and Sexual Violent Offender Registration Program was passed by a Democrat Congress and signed into law by President Clinton. This law established state mandated sex offender registration programs in return for federal crime fighting dollars. The law provided states with resources to set up internet sites to create sex offender profiles that include private information like the home addresses, places of work, and criminal histories of the former prisoners. This law also requires parolees to notify state authorities whenever they move out of state and makes it a crime- not simply a technical parolee violation- for a sex offender not to do so. In Ohio a bill introduced in the 2005-2006 session of the State Legislature took felony transparency

to new laws by proposing to have the Department of Motor Vehicles issue convicted sex offenders special license plates to mark them when their driving.

These type of over the top disclosure laws have created havoc for convicted sex offenders attempting to put their lives back together after serving their sentence. In more than a few cases overheated neighbors have hounded and picketed at the home of quiet former sex offenders based on what they find on these internet sites. Chuckie Claxton, a convicted sex offender from the Orange Groves subdivision of Florida, committed suicide after a neighbor perusing the Florida sex offender website recognized his profile and plastered the community with large posters of his face.

Civil Commitment

It's generally accepted that once someone finishes a prison sentence they get to leave prison. Indefinite imprisonment is, by *definition*, arbitrary. The prisoner gets out when a sentencing board or judge decides its time to let the prisoner go. For a growing number of sex offenders finishing a prison sentence is only the beginning.

In the 1997 Supreme Court decision *Kansas v. Hendricks* the court upheld the use of civil commitment to keep sex offenders under confinement after they've completed their prison sentence. Because this continuation of confinement was considered by the State of Kansas as psychological treatment and not punishment, the subsequent sentencing hearings that were held to determine whether a sex offender can be released after serving their sentence did not,

according to the court, qualify as double jeopardy under the 6th Amendment to the Constitution.

The psychological treatment that many sex offenders are forced into after serving their full sentences can be imposed without any finding that the prisoner is mentally ill. States must simply show that the sex offender has a "mental abnormality" that poses some danger to others. Rather than using mental health resources in prison to help sex offenders while they're there, many states have done away with any notion of prison rehabilitation in the name of punishment. Only a fraction of the mental health dollars that are needed in the criminal justice system are provided. Instead, as a devastating 2005 study on mental health in the California criminal justice system done by the LA Times indicated, state prisons are being used more and more as a place to dump the mentally ill while sex offenders, most of whom are not mentally ill, are taking up space in treatment facilities.

Global Positioning

Not only are many sex offenders confined long after serving the end of their sentences, in a growing number of states, sex offenders are now being forced to wear Global Positioning bracelets as a condition of their release. These bracelets allow state parole monitors to locate any bracelet wearer at anytime in anyplace. If parolees are found in the wrong place or attempt to disable or take off the bracelet they go back to prison. In New Jersey the state government began their new monitoring system in November 2005 which "allows law enforcement to track every

movement of a convicted sex offender, so we'll know if they are in places they shouldn't be. There is no greater priority than the safety of our children" explained Acting Governor Richard J. Codey. State Parole Board Chairman John D'Amico, Jr in the sanguine tone characteristic of liberal totalitarian speak, stated "Between the rapid and continued growth of our Sex Offender Management Unit and our state-of-the-art global positioning monitoring system, the New Jersey State Parole Board is doing more than ever to supervise and protect the safety of New Jersey's citizens and their children." Governor Schwarzenegger has green lighted the same program in California as did the state of Illinois in the Summer of 2005. As the above quotes demonstrate, one can justify just about any authoritarian outrage if it's done in the name of saving the kids.

What the growing popularity of GPS devices attest to is the decline of the very notion of finite or determinate sentencing. Back to the bad old days. Convicted felons are increasingly being seen as a separate, permanent class of pariahs without the same set of human and Constitutional rights as the rest of us. The next logical question about GPS technology is fairly clear. If sex offenders are required to wear GPS devices as a condition for their probation or release from prison then why not murders, people convicted of assault with a deadly weapon, drug dealers, drunk drivers, terrorists and suspected terrorists and on and on. As the class of social pariahs and deviants eligible for round the clock government monitoring grows so does the state apparatus it takes to do the monitoring, tracking, apprehending, and re-incarcerating. This counter-revolution in criminal justice has meant that convicted

felons are increasingly being stripped of all of their constitutional rights in return for the privilege of being released from prison after they've served their time.

Of course the Constitution is silent about GPS technology. But the Bill of Rights is about- more than anything else- protecting the rights of the suspect, the defendant, the convicted and the imprisoned. James Madison knew and the framers agreed that the government authority most amenable to abuse of power is the authority to accuse, charge, and punish someone with a crime. That's why half of the Bill of Rights are concerned with limiting the governments discretion in criminal procedure.

People who inflict non- consensual sexual violence on others- adult or child, should be held accountable for their violations of others. But once they've paid their debt to the victim and the community they should be allowed to re-enter it without the kind of handicaps that make re-entry more difficult and less likely to be successful. Today's blind legislative rage aimed at sex offenders will certainly expand to other classes of former prisoners then to other non- prisoners if we don't demand justice for the convicted sex-offender. Human rights should not be contingent upon whether one's a convicted felon or not. There should be only one condition. Whether one is a human being.

Medical Marijuana and Outcome Based Reasoning

Instrumental reason, when properly applied, leads its practitioner to the conclusion that his or her premises deduce. These premises should be based on facts backed up by empirical evidence. A lot of us are not always that intellectually pure of heart or rigorous. We believe what we believe based on experience, prejudice, family and community traditions, then use reason to justify and defend our pre-dispositions. We start with the conclusions and work backward.

But just because most normal people don't always follow the laws of instrumental reason doesn't mean that we should allow our Supreme Court justices to fall into the same bad intellectual habits as the rest of us. After all we *pay* them to reason correctly and honestly. Not too much to ask for the hundreds of thousands of dollars we pay them each year is it?

This is why the recent Supreme Court decision in the Angel Raich case is so incredible. According to the 6 to 3 Court majority, a sick cancer patient who has a doctor's prescription to smoke pot to stimulate her appetite and who has a state protected right under California law to grow personal use amounts of the herb for personal consumption is engaged in "interstate commerce." This gives the federal government regulatory authority over her ability to medicate herself with pot. The feds have chosen the most restrictive regulatory option possible- prohibition. Raich, a California resident and cancer survivor, will have to use the drugs that the pharmaceutical corporations peddle if

she wants relief. Could this be the real interstate commerce that the Supreme Court is concerned about protecting?

Much of the subtext of the decision is centered around two fears. If the Court acknowledges that there is no rational basis for the idea that homegrown, personal use pot *that is not being sold, bought, or distributed on the market* affects interstate commerce than they would throw into question any number of similar rulings that have stretched the scope of the commerce clause to usurp state and popular authority (see what's left of the 10th amendment) over any number of issues. So it's better to be consistently wrong than to change one's mind and admit you were wrong in the past. They call this *Stare Decisis*. The court cited the equally incredible *Wickard v. Filburn* case in 1942 where the court argued that a farmer had no right to grow wheat on his own farm for personal consumption because the act effected the interstate wheat market and therefore was subject to the commerce clause.

Fear that any challenge to the federal regulatory state will open the door to the overturn of 1960's civil rights legislation (which used commerce clause arguments to ban discrimination in public accommodations, and private employment) underlies much of the progressive apprehension around limiting federal authority to regulate state and local activity. But a plausible argument can be made that a travel hotel by the very nature of its customer base directly implicates interstate commerce. The same can be said of an employer. Companies exist to engage in commerce. To the extent that the trade is or substantially effects

interstate commerce, a very low threshold in today's world of national and global markets, Congress has the authority under the Constitution to regulate it. But homegrown pot for personal use? If this falls under the commerce clause than what *doesn't*? As Justice Thomas said in his dissent "if the majority is to be taken seriously, the Federal Government may now regulate quilting bees, clothes drives and potluck suppers throughout the 50 states." In the Raich case there was no buying no selling no distribution. Not even close.

The second, and probably bigger, fear was that at a time when federal courts are under attack by the right for being too liberal and too activist a ruling that would have effectively allowed states to legalize homegrown, personal consumption of pot might have angered the Republican controlled Congress so much that a constitutional challenge around subject matter jurisdiction might have ensued. This, no doubt, had something to do with the prominent role the liberal wing of the court played in the Raich ruling. The most liberal Justice on the court, Stevens, wrote the majority opinion. Ginsburg, Souter, and Breyer, all liberals, concurred. This was the only politically plausible conclusion they could have reached- given their fears- and they knew it even before they took the case. The three dissenters Rehnquist, Thomas, and O'Connor, all center-right justices, were the voices of medical compassion, personal freedom and decentralization of political authority. God help us.

The state of the anti- prison movement

There is plenty for anti- prison/ PIC organizers and others doing work in the criminal justice system to be proud of over the last few years. We have won the debate (although not the battle) over the central role that treatment plays in breaking drug addiction and the many ways in which locking people up for drug convictions is repressive and wasteful. A study on Proposition 36 (the California voter approved law that allows those charged with drug possession to access treatment instead of prison) showed that between the initiatives passage in 2000 and 2006 over 140,000 drug defendants have avoided jail or prison due to the law. A victory by any measure.

We've also been able to shut down prisons as well. One high profile case was the closing of the Swanson Juvenile Corrections Facility. An amazing array of individuals and organizations lead by the Juvenile Justice Project of Louisiana came together and demanded that the facility be closed- and it was. In October of 2005 the Michigan Youth Correction Facility, a private prison which caged 320 youth, was shut down due to high vacancy rates, budget deficits and, according to the group Michigan Protection and Advocacy Services, mismanagement around mental care for the youth. In fact, much of the progress we as a movement have made around shutting down prisons and de-incarceration has been driven by state deficits. Early release policies in places like Kentucky, and West Virginia were also enabled by lean budgets. But it's important to remember that it is our organizing, popular education and research work around alternative sentencing, drug treatment, and prison guard abuse that helped to set the political stage

for these prison closures and early release policies. We've also made *some* headway on issues like the death penalty and re-entry of ex-prisoners.

But these bright spots are just that- bright spots on an otherwise dark political terrain. Although the U.S. crime rate is at its lowest since the FBI has been keeping records, the incarceration rate continues to climb in California, Texas and on the Federal level. Today the U.S. has the highest incarceration rate in the world at 726 per 100,000. Despite our efforts to highlight the incentives that drive the private prison industry (more inmates mean more profits) we've been unable to convince enough policy makers to prioritize the needs of the community (education, transportation, health care) over the needs of the investor class. We've also been unable to organize the number of people needed to demand these changes on the state and federal level. All the talk of falling profits for the PIC notwithstanding, companies like Corrections Corporation of America, Wackenhut, and the GEO group seem to be doing a good job of turning state and federal government prison contracts into mo' better profits. Meanwhile prison "reformers" like Arnold Schwarzenegger have just proposed two new private prisons in California as a payback to the state's prison guards union for opposing his right-wing ballot initiatives in November 2005. Like usual, the liberals have been no better...

What to do? Don't know. A strategy that holds out promise is linking consistencies by emphasizing how the PIC and prison expansion negatively effects poor, urban people of color, as well as women, LGBT people and queer youth. We

also should be thinking more about how we expand this net by showing how the criminal justice system also effects poor rural whites in depressed communities, working class suburban youth, the elderly and disabled inside and outside of prison. This "popular front" approach to the PIC need not water down our principals or politics. If done right it could help us focus on a few bottom-line struggles that would give shape to our movement.

Red Black and Not Green:

Green Party Politics in the Black Community

Black voters in the U.S. are like all other voters with one exception. Many of us had to die for the right to vote for the lesser of two evils. Naturally, we want our votes not only to count, (no slam dunk) we want them to make a difference. Because Blacks are not an electoral majority in any state or nationally, maximizing the worth of our choices by being a part of an electoral coalition that has a real chance to win power is a priority. Black voters tend to register their anger and frustration at the political status quo simply by not voting not by supporting third parties.

This wasn't always the case. Over a 100 years ago over one million blacks, primarily from the south and west, played a critical role in the rise of the Populist Party- a mass based third party movement that sought to hold the northern industrialist establishment politically accountable for dropping crop prices and predatory monetary practices. At first White populist leaders like Tom Watson from Georgia advocated for racial unity in the struggle against the railroads and the banks. But after a populist split in 1896, Watson and other white party functionaries betrayed Black populists and either defected to the Democrats or sat silent as the Democrat Party and white southern vigilantes re-imposed white supremacy through disenfranchisement and mob violence. Black populist leaders and supporters were killed. We learned our lesson. This was the last time any multiracial third party enjoyed support by the masses of Blacks.

Today, Black fidelity to the Democrat Party provides real rewards for the Black political class. It offers jobs, contracts, and the comfort of a Time-Life version of the 1960's civil rights movement that features John Kennedy and Martin Luther King holding hands towards the promise land. Of course the Republicans offer more money. But who wants to be a sell out? (not a rhetorical question. The list is getting longer) Greens offer little but symbolism on the part of Black elites. A vote of conscience. Short of dropping out of electoral politics altogether, which growing numbers of people are doing everyday, that symbolism maybe more important than the all the "lost" Black votes in Florida and Ohio that Democrats were unwilling to fight for.

The environmental, peace, and third world solidarity movements from the 1970 and 80's (the grassroots of the U.S. Green Party) has always represented a policy majority and a cultural minority- a minority that black activists found difficult to relate to. We agreed with and worked with White progressives on some issues (South Africa, nuclear freeze) but never developed the kind of cultural and social affinities that nurture and sustain movements from one campaign to the next. A political consequence has been that the organizations that were created out of these progressive movements- Global Exchange, Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth- lack the levels of Black participation that could sustain critical mass organizing in our communities. In the August 7 2006 edition of *the Nation* Mark Hertsgrgaard quotes Jerome Ringo the new head of National Wildlife Federation in a cover story on the state of the environmental movement. "I am the first African American in

history to head a major conservation group." I don't know whether Ringo said this with sadness or a sense of racial pride. In either event it helps to explain why the Green Party has so few Black adherents.

The Failure of "Outreach"

What do white activists do when there aren't enough dark people in the room? Outreach. Set up a table at the public university in town. Pass out fliers for the next meeting at the Saturday morning flea market. E-mail blasts to activist- of -color list-servs. Whatever works... Problem is that shit don't work. Moreover, white activists know that shit don't work. But they get a double bonus. They can pretend to be doing something "pro-active" to bring in colored folks with the knowledge that few if any colored folks are coming in- at least not to stay. (They've been known to slip out right before the vegan pot-luck) Multiracial organizing is not easy. Doing it in bad faith makes it harder.

Another problem is proximity. The Green Party is heavily influenced by three main demographics- educated, urban, non-profit activists, educated, university town academic/professionals and well to do hippies in the exurbs. All three bases of support have organizations and social networks that provide the Party with multiple, reinforcing contacts with potential recruits, volunteers and leaders very few of whom happen to be Black. Although environmental justice organizations like Project Underground and Green Action have been doing great work in Black communities, the Green Party has little institutional

infrastructure their. The DC Statehood Green Party is one of a few exceptions.

Furthermore, the Party's ties with the Black church, the hub of black political and social activity, are non-existent. Whether this is because of old style party defense of political turf on the part of the Democrats or the subtle contempt that some green progressives have towards religion, the failure of the Party to build relations to this central Black institution is at the heart of its failure to reach the black electorate.

Organizational inclusiveness can not be achieved by reaching out. It can only be achieved by getting up, going to where the struggles for human dignity and justice are being waged and fighting with the marginalized.

Choosing battles carefully?

In a 2002 piece called "Turning the Green Party Black" Donna Jo Warren, a former candidate for California Lt. Governor, described how she became a Green. "While attending a meeting in South Central Los Angeles, I met a young man who handed me some dog-eared sheets of paper, describing the "Green Party" and its platform. "My God," I spurted out after I had read what he had given me: "I'm a Green!"

Donna Jo Warren is special. It takes more than a pamphlet for most folks. It takes demonstrating that the political organization that is seeking to

recruit you has a living commitment to you and your community and is ready to struggle for what it claims are its principals.

Green campaigns like Ralph Nader's 2000 presidential run and Matt Gonzalez's 2004 mayoral run in San Francisco were pretty sympathetic to the racial and economic justice concerns of the Black community. But both failed to inspire significant numbers of Black voters. Blacks consistently poll more progressive than other groups on most issues, particularly on racial and economic justice issues and war. But in the Nader campaign of 2000 the proportion of Black voters who supported the Green Party was the smallest of any other major racial demographic- except whites. In the San Francisco race Gavin Newsom, a Yuppie Democrat with centrist tendencies, beat Gonzalez in heavily Black precincts. Some of this was due black liberal leaders defending their Democrat Party enclaves by taking racial cheap shots. But some of the racial rift reflects simple political tone deafness on the part of Greens.

Big Bad Willie and Evil Ackerman

Eager to make Board President Gonzalez pay for his unwillingness to rubber stamp his appointees (many of whom were Black) Mayor Willie Brown inserted himself in the middle of the SF mayoral race to succeed him by attacking Gonzalez from a tactical stronghold- the Black church "He's got some kind of defect in his head that makes him believe African Americans aren't qualified." This indictment came from a man who presided over the largest exodus of Blacks from San Francisco since WW II. The number of Blacks who

became homeless under the Brown administration increased exponentially. Brown did appoint more Blacks to high level positions in the city bureaucracy than previous mayors. He kept his class commitments to the Black bourgeois.

The Gonzales campaign quickly responded by calling Brown a "liar", highlighting the number of Blacks involved in his campaign and Matt's long time commitment to racial justice. But during the Gonzales campaign the candidate often appeared to be running against Mayor Brown and his backroom machine style politics instead of Supervisor Newsom and his record. In addition, African Americans can be politically sensitive to White charges of Black corruption. Not only because of racist double standards but also because of the history of powerful whites using these charges as a way of discrediting effective and popular Black elect officials. Willie Brown made scores of enemies over his 40 plus years in California politics- some of them very powerful. If he was so corrupt for so long was it just dumb luck he never got caught with his hands in the cookie jar?

On the San Francisco School Board three Green Party members lined up against Arlene Ackerman, a no nonsense Black female educator who helped to raise test scores, and turn around failing schools. She also had broad support not only in the Black community, but from all over the city. While the Greens on the board didn't constitute a majority they were powerful enough to squeeze her out after five years over a controversy around a pay raise lead to a lawsuit.

Much of what Green Party school board members Sarah Lipson, Eric Mar and Mark Sanchez proposed under Ackerman's tenure-

small schools, disarming police on campuses, have wide support in black neighborhoods. But the real reason for Ackerman's early exit had more to do with clashing personalities than policies. The progressives on the board didn't like Ackerman's "style." She was too uppity, too forceful. She didn't play well with others. She showed contempt for some of the Greens pet causes (like the banning of irradiated meat from district schools). All this may be so. But Blacks and progressives from all over the country are watching San Francisco because of the relative strength of the Green Party. If Greens don't find more politically savvy and constructive ways of working with African American leadership the racially tinged tiffs that have peppered Black and Green relations in San Francisco could become yet another symbol of the inability of Greens to make and maintain meaningful alliances with Blacks. If the Green Party has learned anything over the last few years its that supporting reparations, and being against the death penalty is not enough when you're competing against a party that is perceived by most Blacks as being an historical ally in the fight for civil rights. The words are right but the music is off.

Nader Factor

The story of Nader's relationship to the Black electorate is familiar. Nader was a spoiler. His arrogance in running for president as a Green party candidate in 2000 and an Independent progressive in 2004 jeopardized black political interests. In 2000 the objections were more tempered. Jesse Jackson and John Conyers sent polite letters to his campaign thanking him for his long record of progressive

service, agreeing with him on a number of issues and telling him to please not to run. Randall Robinson of Transafrica was a campaign co-chair and Cornell West came out strong for Nader in 2000. In the run up to 2004 things got ugly. West, along with a whole host of other nervous and apologetic progressives, pleaded with Nader not to run. Nader's attempt to secure the Green Party nomination was blocked by party activists like Medea Benjamin who supported David Cobb and candidates who agreed to a "safe states strategy" to make sure the Democrats could continue to ignore Green Party issues in their head to head against Bush. The Vice Presidential candidate, Pat LaMarche even claimed "I think I would vote for Kerry if it were close." It's nice to know that the presidential ticket you're voting for might cancel out your vote with their own. Black voters are supposed to switch party's for this?

The Black Caucus served as a vanguard attack dog. Caucus representatives held a highly publicize meeting with Nader during his 2000 presidential campaign that was notable for its "frank exchanges." Congressman Melvin Watt from North Carolina exploded "You're just another arrogant white man - - telling us what we can do... it's all about your ego - another fucking arrogant white man." In a July 14th 2004 letter to the Black Congressional Caucus Nader politely asked for an apology...

The party strategy was to pull Nader into a high profile back and forth with black leaders in order to demonstrate to black voters the "arrogance" of white progressives who dare to challenge Democrat party hegemony in the black community. He didn't take the bate. But like too many

white progressives, his approach to racial issues was that they are subordinate to the "real" problem- corporate social domination. Under this view Black suffering is little more than an effect of corporate malfeasance- a kind of capitalist collateral damage that has more to do with class than race. In the above mentioned letter, Nader refers to "racial profiling.. the failed war on drugs..the commercial exploitation of low income areas, environmental racism" as effects of "corporate forces" and regularly failed to confront racial conflict in America on its own terms. Unfortunately, Nader is far from alone on the Left in this respect.

The only time that the political establishment has ever responded to Black demands for social justice has been when its had to choose between accommodation or the prospect of prolonged racial strife. The Radical Republicans took up the cause of ending slavery in response to the growing militancy of the abolition movement. 100 years later the Democrat Party showed tangible support for Civil Rights and economic justice only after confronted with racial standoffs in the 1950's and the rise of the black power movement and black urban uprisings in the 60's. In this respect nothing has changed. Regardless of whether Blacks vote Green or Democrat or not at all, our influence and power will only be as strong as our grassroots movements are.

The Riders Ride Off

The biggest loser in the recent acquittal of former Oakland Police Department cops Clarence Mabanag, Jude Siapno, and Matthew Hornung- popularly know as the "Riders"- is not Alameda County District Attorney Tom Orloff or the former head of the Oakland Police Department Chief Richard Word who took heat from some for firing the officers before they had been found guilty in court. The biggest losers in this case were the folks who got beat down by these cops and the rest of us- the residents of Oakland. On May 19, 2005 an Alameda County jury sent the OPD and us a familiar but chilling message- in this county a badge gives you a license to commit assault, beat up suspects, plant evidence, and falsify reports. As long as these things are done to "them" (the black and brown underclass) in order to protect "us" (everyone else) then it's alright.

The 2003 and 2005 jury acquittals over charges that the riders engaged in falsifying police reports, excessive use of force, and making false arrests surprised few. The defense attorney for the three cops, Michael Rains, (the fourth suspect Valquaz absconded to Mexico) masterfully employed the Nuremberg defense by portraying the officers as dutiful public servants simply following the orders of department heads and city political leaders, including Mayor Brown, to crack down on drug dealers in West Oakland.

Rains was also able to portray Keith Batt, the clean cut white rookie cop who blew the whistle on the defendants for misconduct as a self serving liar who concocted stories of police brutality as a face saver for his own inability to

deal with the hard realities of police work in Oakland. A stretch to be sure but one that provided jurors an answer to the oblivious question- why would this rookie cop put his career on the line by cooking up such an elaborate and explosive accusation? For those jurors who were predisposed towards the defense, this plausible but unlikely theory of motive was enough.

The saddest part of the rider acquittals is that the prosecution couldn't get a conviction on any of the 63 criminal counts largely due to jury racism and classism. The prosecution witnesses were uneducated, poor black males, most of whom had criminal records. None of these characteristics means that someone's a liar. But simply put, poor, black men are unsympathetic witnesses because they are the "them" that the cops are supposed to be protecting us from. This is the mentality that created a jury deadlock on 17 of the 13 charges in the latest trial. These dead lockers obviously thought that their job on the jury was to protect the cops not to try the facts. Now that the riders have been acquitted and want their old jobs back the question is who is going to protect us from them?

Nigga Please

It seems like the latest way for black leaders to demonstrate how adult they are is to declare their opposition to the use of the "N" word- No exceptions for wiggers playing a game of pick up in some trailer park in West Virginia, black professors with PHD's, or urban hipsters who imagine that PC language conventions don't apply to them because nobody could ever mistake them for a racist.

Recently Al Sharpton has joined Jesse Jackson and other high profile Blacks in their demand that we stop using nigga to refer to one another. When Aaron McGruder wrote a Cartoon Network episode entitled "The Return of the King" in which he had a resurrected Martin Luther King using the word nigga in a speech chastising the crassness of hip hop culture, Sharpton claimed "We are totally offended by the continuous use of the n-word in McGruder's show." If you don't get the irony dripping from McGruder's work stop reading this essay. You probably won't get this either.

But what if the words nigger and nigga are not the same word? What if they're spelled differently. What if they're pronounced differently. What if the usage is different. What if one is always a pejorative and the other can be used to refer to your closest friend- ("you know you my bestest nigga. we go back a minute"), an acquaintance- ("yeah, I remember dat nigga. He used to sit back in class with his headphones on all day") somebody on T.V. that makes you proud- ("did you see dat nigga stomp at the baseline? He

had mothafuckas fallin all over themselves lookin ridiculous") or an enemy- ("that nigga trippin yo. I'm finna go back over there and check that bitch"). I could go on. The point is that skinheads and Klansman don't use the word nigga when they want to communicate their contempt, or hatred for Blacks. They use the word nigger.

Blacks have a long history of inverting or simply ignoring the official definitions of words. The Black Baby Boomers that now opine over the use of the word nigga among Blacks were the same folks who walked around 30 years ago using "bad" to refer to things that they thought were stylishly rebellious and hence- "good". They created a distinction between being a man and being "the Man". Like the Hip Hop generation today they too invented new words and gave new meaning to old ones. An awful lot of older Blacks in the 1960's and 1970's thought using the term Black instead of Negro was offensive as well. Unlike their generational successors, Silent Generation Blacks didn't turn their objection to use of the word Black into a moral crusade. They remembered when the term "New Negro" was a bold declaration of racial pride by the young and the term Colored was preferred by their parents and whites. Alas, baby boomers are in love with moral crusades, even ones that highlight their own hypocrisies.

Who the New Centrist Moderates Really Represent

The recent National Press Club speech by California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger was yet another testament to the vacuity of the "post partisan" school of politics. In his talk he asked the question that voters across the land are burning to know the answer to. "How come Republicans and Democrats out here don't schmooze with each other?" This is apparently the big problem in Washington these days.

Centrist moderates don't propose a coherent approach to political, economic, social or culture matters. They represent a kind of positionality- somewhere between liberal and conservative- that the mainstream media and large portions of the American political class have imbued with moral significance. To be a centrist moderate is to be reasonable, sober, mature, objective. At the same time some like to use the term "the radical center" to give Third-way adherents an edgy, in your face feel. These people are masters at having it both ways.

In Anglo history, the association between virtue and moderation in political matters goes back to Aristotle. In his political writings moderation was considered an important part of one's character in both the private and public citizen. In the past this was widely understood as conservative. Today it's the centrist moderate that protects the status quo and rejects calls for fundamental changes.

The shift can be traced back to the seduction of conservative Europeans during the first half of the 20th century by the fascists. They too were against communism. They too supported traditional cultural, and believed that social hierarchy and conformity were necessary to the cohesion of the nation. They too hated the Jews. This seduction ended the conservative commitment to temperamental politics and began their drive for power through "movement" politics.

When Barry Goldwater, the first political leader of the contemporary conservative movement declared that "extremism in the defense of liberty is no vice" and "moderation in the pursuit of justice is no virtue" he signaled the end of temperamental conservatism in America- a conservatism that was defined not by ideology but by character virtues- moderation, prudence, circumspection, respect for custom, and prejudice. Russell Kirk represented the old conservatism. Newt Gingrich is perhaps the best example of the new modernist conservative.

The elites who call themselves centrist purport to speak for the large and growing number of Americans who are proudly declaring themselves "independent" or who decline to align themselves with one of the two major parties. It is true that the views of many in the electorate and most Americans generally do not fall neatly in liberal or conservative boxes. One is pro-choice and pro-death penalty and pro-union and pro- tax cuts and doesn't know whether they should call themselves liberal or conservative or what's the point in choosing between the two in the first place. These are the so-called centrist voters that the

corporate press claims that only establishment moderates that make it on to Meet the Press can represent.

"Post partisan" politicians like, Joe Lieberman, the old John McCain and the new Arnold Schwarzenegger (see how often these things can change?) reject the politics of ideology in favor of the politics of power. In a two party system in dynamic stasis the centrist moderate is king-maker. The most important engines that fuel the stasis- the economy, the military, and the media- are usually insulated from democratic pressures. It is the elite of these broad interests that fund the most influential in the political class which, in turn, represents those interests to the eclipse of other more grassroots voices. These elites contribute to both parties to hedge their bets. They're free market fundamentalists but often have contempt for religious ones. They support using the U.S. military to protect their "way of life." They don't represent American voters much less the American people.

Governor Schwarzenegger disagrees. In his 2007 inaugural address he claimed he represented "a dynamic center that is not held captive by either the left or the right or the past. The American people are instinctively centrist ... so should be our government." Well, the American people are instinctively pragmatic. Meaning that we're more interested in doing the possible solving problems through compromise than we are in fighting for the whole loaf or shrugging our shoulders and walking away. And despite broad religious sentiment we carry with us very empirical tendencies. In 1992 Ross Perot and his Reform party tapped into this with

his "get under the hood of the car and fix the problem" rhetoric.

The primary reason that growing parts of the electorate are rejecting to two party system and registering as Independent, Green, Libertarian and Decline to State is that they realize that the parties don't represent them and they're increasingly disgusted with the lesser of two evils game. The attempt to co-op this growing movement by claiming that it's some cry for post-partisan centrism is laughable. The people are seeking alternatives to the two party corporate duopoly not more faithful representatives of it who are unconstrained by ideology or the virtues they claim to represent.

First, kill all the Smokers

The Oakland City Council is about to pass the most restrictive smoking ban in the U.S. On June 12th 2007 the public safety committee voted for a smoking ban that would prohibit tobacco in public parks, outdoor dining areas and bus stops. According to Heather McDonald of the Oakland Tribune "it also proposes banning smoking in all newly constructed apartment buildings and condominium complexes and would declare secondhand smoke a public nuisance in multi-family housing in an effort to protect non-smokers from the toxic substance."

Smoke isn't good for you. In fact it's bad to inhale it. But instead of choice- smokers can choose which bars and restaurants to go into, which apartments to live in etc.- many liberals choose authority. Stick it to the smokers because it's bad for them, and tobacco companies are evil and right wing (is that redundant?) and my uncle died from lung cancer and if people were just inconvenienced and taxed and shamed enough by their addiction to nicotine they would stop smoking.

I'm all for ending cigarette corporations. No for profit institution should be able to make money off an addictive and deadly substance. But despite what clever trial attorneys argue in multi million dollar lawsuits, we've known that smoking is bad for you for decades. During the 1990's health and safety activists and legislators got bored with the tobacco companies and started targeting smokers for fines, restrictions and public scorn for their addiction. Taking a page from the drug war concept of "user

accountability", these crusaders set about banning smoking in bars, then restaurants, than parks, then all publicly owned lands. Now the new frontier consists of banning smoking in apartment buildings, cars that have minors in them and forcing smokers to stand yards away from any building entrances that any non- smoker might find occasion to walk through.

The "science" underpinning all of this comes from a number of studies about the health effects of second hand smoke. I put science in quotes not because I think second hand smoke is harmless but because its dangers have been grossly overstated. Dr. Michael Siegel, a renowned Professor at Boston University School of Public Health and supporter of reasonable restrictions on indoor workplace smoking has said that claims that even short exposures to second hand smoke can be deadly in otherwise healthy people are "ridiculous." It is claims like the above put out by alarmist groups like American Cancer Society that provide the basis for much of the hysteria and draconian legislation.

Siegel went on to say "today, the anti-smoking movement seems more motivated by a desire to overtly discriminate against and punish smokers. Instead of compassion, we seem to be supporting intolerance...and just plain meanness." This statement was made in response to the position taken by the anti-smoker group Action on Smoking and Health opposing access to surgical procedures for smokers because of the cost to other health insurance holders and taxpayers.

Second hand smoke is the enemy. But not just any second hand smoke. The smoke coming from city owned buses or industrial plants or idling big rig trucks in the Port of Oakland that shortens the lives of thousands with lung cancer and asthma is commercial pollution- the unfortunate bi- product of a vibrant city. This kind of smoke has very powerful producers, enablers, apologists and deniers. No, the smoke that really gets into the lungs of the public health crusaders is the smoke coming from individuals, lighting up in parks on a windy day. And believe them when they say that they're not so much worried about the dirty, yellow teethed, smokers themselves. Those folks are disproportionately poor or working class and without much political clout. They make an easy target for public health demagogues. They're really only worried about- you guess it- the children. One whiff of a Marlboro and Johnny's sure to wide up like that sad kid in that 70's made for TV movie The Boy in the Plastic Bubble.

You don't have to be in the pockets of the tobacco company executives, an unsavorily lot responsible for marketing death and disease to billions around the world, to realize that the urge to punish and castigate smokers for their addiction to nicotine may make us feel pious but it does little to help the smokers who want to quit. And, at the risk of sounding a little old fashioned, in a free country people should be allowed to smoke without having to crawl under a well ventilated, designated smoker's rock. Sometimes this means you might get a little smoke in your face. Get over it. It's the price we pay.

Liberal Solidarity, Radical Politics- international anarchist support in a time of domestic crisis

I was talking with a friend of mine from Chile about a year ago about U.S. activists who traveled around the global south working with various revolutionary and autonomous struggles against neo-liberal colonialism. Mainly white, multi-lingual kids from upper middle class homes who cared enough about the struggles and suffering of others to catch a plane and do something to help. Sounds nice. But she said something that stuck with me. If U.S. activists really want to show solidarity towards struggles for self determination around the world we need to focus on reining in and shutting down our government and our corporations first. Once Empire America is defeated the whole world's prospects for social-liberation and economic justice will greatly improve. Che Guevara put the same sentiment another way 40 years ago "I envy you. You North Americans are very lucky. You are fighting the most important fight of all--you live in the heart of the beast."

U.S. activists on the left have often failed to distinguish between liberal humanitarian universalism which, due to its Christian roots, emphasizes aid in return for obedience and cultural renunciation and radical solidarity which seeks to address the direct damage that neo-liberal colonialist foreign policies have produced by standing with the prime victims of these policies in their fight for human dignity. The term "standing" should not always be taken literally. In the international context it often means standing up in your hometown against corporations that pillage the world. It may mean coordinating a divesture movement against a

foreign government or a corporation. It may mean "bring the war home" by confronting recruiters on campus, sabotaging the instruments of war, or other more creative things..

The point is that the focus of international solidarity for people who don't come from the places/movements that they seek to be in solidarity with should be *weakening the concentrations of power from within the empires*. If you're from North American or live here you don't have to go anywhere in order to infiltrate a hegemonic empire. You're right in the middle of it all- geographically and historically. Empires use law, force, geography, politics, and bribery to protect themselves from their victims. Being in the "heart of the beast" is a privilege because it affords us access to all of the pressure points of the institutions of global power. This doesn't mean anarchist should never go abroad to support struggles in other parts of the world. It's nice to get out of the U.S. if you have the opportunity and struggles often can use allies on the ground. But we should no longer view international solidarity work on the part of white first world activists as revolutionary notches in one's belt. There's plenty of work to do at home. The strategic access that North American anarchists have to "the beast" is indeed worthy of envy. What are we going to do with it?

On Spines

It's a rhetorical routine by now. Progressives berate Democrats, particularly in Congress, for their lack of spine. This, it is imagined, is the real problem with the Democrat Party leadership. Implicit in this charge is the idea that the Democrat Party is fundamentally progressive but just too scared to reveal its true colors. Democrats are scared of being labeled weak on the war on terror, scared of being seen as too accommodating to Black civil rights activists and immigrant rights groups, scared of being portrayed as too permissive on cultural issues. This fear is alleged to be a product of the post 68 political decline of liberalism and the need of the Party, after numerous electoral defeats, to move to the ideological center. The political success of Bill Clinton is often sighted as evidence that Party success is dependent on its candidate's willingness to move to "the center." Of course, Ross Perot's name is seldom mentioned in this electoral analysis.

This view is unfair to those Democrats who are stand up progressives, few as they are in Washington, and also delusional about the majority of Democratic Party voters and the politicians that they vote for. The progressive caucus in the Congress totals about 57 democrats and one independent- about one third of the Democrat party in Congress. So called liberal blue states like California and New York are governed by moderate Republicans. Only a small handful of states- Washington State, New Jersey, Vermont can be said to be governed by progressives.

So what's all this bluster targeted at Democrat leaders about?

The social justice left wants to believe that they and the contemporary Democrat Party share an essential set of values and political goals. Universal health care, reproductive rights, gun control, multilateral diplomacy, affirmative action, progressive taxation- these causes have been the glue that has bonded establishment liberals, social justice progressives and DLC "centrists" together over the last 40 years of the Democratic Party.

What has been the fruit of this coalition? Decline. From the labor movement to the dismantling of the social safety net to the evisceration of civil liberties and privacy rights to the re-segregation of our schools, the alliance that was put together to defend the gains of the 1930's and 60's has been impotent in the face of a bolder, smarter, and more disciplined conservative opposition.

The issues that have separated social justice progressives and radicals from establishment liberals and DLC centrists have been buried by the left in order to keep their seat at the Democratic Party table- Electoral reform, the drug war, corporate welfare, media justice, same sex marriage, fair trade, the death penalty. Where the liberal establishment pays lip service to the issues that progressives care about, DLC centrists use progressives as examples of what's wrong the Democratic Party. Both seem to maintain their hold on the Party defeat after defeat by marginalizing the progressive wing of the party.

The truth is that the Democrat Party primarily represents corporate interests, and individual wealthy donors. They *must* continue to represent these "interests" if they want to remain a viable counter- force to the Republicans. Could it be that the real folks who lack spine are not the liberal and centrist democrats who have been perfectly open and honest in their disregard for progressive issues but progressives themselves?

The Politics of Electoral Addition

For decades progressive intellectuals have been debating the impact that shifting demographics will have on the American electorate. One point of agreement has been the recognition that in the mid-term the decrease in white male and married voters and the growth in voters of color could make Republican conservatives a structural demographic minority. Republicans themselves seem all too aware of this threat. Matthew Dowd, a Republican pollster and 2004 Bush campaign strategist claims "As a share of the total electorate, the traditional white Republican base is declining...these white voters are declining as a percentage of the electorate." The only way for Republicans to avoid long term minority status is to either polarize increasing numbers of whites into their camp by holding out the specter of terrorism and an Al Sharpton led "rainbow socialism" or pick off enough black, Latino, Asian and Native American voters that they're able to prevent a stable progressive counter majority from developing. Like smart political strategists they're hard at work pursuing both. Problem is Democrats are so spooked about current Republican governing majorities their doing things that could jeopardize their ability to create a center-left political majority that is durable enough to last beyond one or two elections.

Only 14 years ago Democrats controlled both houses of Congress and the Presidency for two years. Republicans didn't respond to this by attacking its base in order to appear more "moderate." They did the opposite by building fundraising networks, developing their own media infrastructure and uniting the party under a conservative

agenda- the Contract With America. By contrast, powerful Democrats are doing their best to throw inconvenient constituents over board in order to win over more white, middle class suburbanites, rural males and married voters- people who represent a shrinking proportion of the electorate. At the very point where the plausibility of a multiracial, progressive governing majority is within reach outfits like the Democratic Leadership Conference are telling follow Democrats to fight over an ever shrinking pool of White centrist and moderately conservative voters.

The Rainbow Dream

The idea that class based cross racial alliances on the left could wield political power is an old one. For a brief period in the 1880's and 90's Black and White populists developed an alliance that challenged railroad and banking industrialists whom they felt were responsible for farmers losing there land and dropping crop prices. Labor unions like the IWW welcomed blacks in their ranks under the belief that capitalists used racism to split the labor movement and benefited from intra worker conflict.

This class analysis is still the basic rational for cross racial progressive politics although other issues like the environmental and peace also have played a part in pulling together multiracial progressive alliances. The Democrat Party's Clintonian commitment to a politics of the white middle has called into question the original basis of the party's multiracial progressivism. Not unlike President Eisenhower during the New Deal era, Bill Clinton's tenure represented a period of ideological consolidation for the

Right. He slowed the rise of conservative hegemony and made their right wing agenda (welfare reform, the crime bill, immigration "reform", the ban on gay marriage, etc.) *slightly* less right wing in most cases.

But the viability of majoritarian progressive politics had been demonstrated in cities like Chicago (Harold Washington) and Baltimore (Kurt Schmoke) before the rise of Clinton. In both places black progressives were able to pull together winning cross racial coalitions for progressive ideas and policies. These electoral coalitions never relied on or received a majority of white votes. Jesse Jackson's 1988 run for president, which garnered seven million votes, scared the Democratic Party establishment so much that they famously dispatched Ed Koch in a "stop Jessie" campaign after he won the Michigan Caucuses. After Jackson's victory Al Gore, also a candidate for president, criticized Jackson's earlier embrace of Yasser Arafat and stated "I categorically deny Jackson's notion that there's a moral equivalency between Israel and the PLO." This coordinated attack on Jackson after his victory is evidence of more than just the familiar complaint that the Democrats take voters of color for granted- particularly black ones. It's evidence of an active and powerful party elite that have contempt of for progressive, independent, non-white political leadership and, by extension, the communities that they represent.

The Old Line State Shuffle

This type of white establishment contempt in the Maryland Democratic Party is still epitomized best by the Donald Schaefer- Duburns political relationship of the 1970's

through the 80's. Schaefer, the "colorful" big city eastern sea board machine Democrat who represented the last great wave of White mayors of majority Black cities, was king. After serving almost 20 years as Mayor, Schaefer became the Governor and appointed "Du" to the Mayors post in 1986. Duburns, a politically gifted man, was his loyal hand during the 1970's and 80's as an East Baltimore Representative, then as President of the Baltimore City Council. He worked with the Mayor- steering city contracts, delivering votes, keeping the lid on black political anger through his Eastside Democratic Organization. As long as Blacks didn't get too uppity there was a place at the table for them too. The election of Schomke as the Mayor of Baltimore in 1987 didn't represent an end to this era just a shifting of the guard. He himself knew this which is why arguably the most successful black, big city Mayor of the late 1980's and 1990's never bothered to run for a statewide office.

Blacks and Latinos make up close to 40% of the electorate in Maryland. This fact alone makes them players in state politics. Republicans understood this when Robert Erlich decided to offer the Lieutenant Governor post to Michael Steel, a Black conservative Republican, in his run against Kathleen Kennedy Townsend. Her campaign, fearful of losing to many white suburban votes decided to ignore loyal black Democrats who wanted Townsend to choose a running mate from their ranks and picked an obscure retired Admiral- Charles Larson- a White Republican who switched his party affiliation weeks before the announcement. The rest is history. Townsend lost. The Republicans didn't plan on taking a Black majority just because Steel was on the

ticket. But they received enough black votes to put Erlich over the top. Had the Republican 1998 gubernatorial challenger Ellen Sauerbray done as well with black voters she would have beat the Democrat incumbent Paris Glendening four years earlier.

Apparently, White Maryland Democrat elites are more committed to keeping Black Democrats "in there place" than keeping together effective political coalitions and winning elections. In 2006 they have chosen to back Ben Cardin over Kweisi Mfume, a political giant who spent time as a Congressman and the leader of the most prominent Black political organization in the last century, the NAACP. Ben Cardin doesn't have some of the baggage Mfume has but he hasn't been through the battles that Mfume has either. This is the kind of party establishment betrayal of Black leaders that cause political realignments and break up progressive coalitions. Both Democrats are polling ahead of Steel into the summer months and a recent poll showed Mfume closing in on Cardin's April 2006 nine point gap.

The Democrats cave on immigration "reform"

It's clear Latino's are going to play an ever larger role in American politics in the years to come. This use to be considered a mid-to long term plus for Democrat Party politics. After Bush's surprising 40 percent take of the Latino vote in 2004 the showing should have been a wake up call for the Democrat Party. Instead Senate Democrat Party leaders decided that national guard troops, fences along the boarder and a plan to deport over two million undocumented immigrates who've been in the country under

two years is worthy of support. For this Democrats have won a guest worker program that gives corporations access to "flexible" low wage Mexican labor and exit visas after they've been used up. It's not clear what the Democrats would propose if they were in charge but this calculated political ambiguity is a familiar tactic of an ideologically fragmented party that puts more trust in the destabilizing tendencies of unitary political power than their own ideals.

If any group of Democrats had an incentive to represent an alternative to conservative Republican calls to deport millions, and send more men with guns to the border, border state Democrats would be the ones. But they've showed little courage and political acumen.

In August of last year Governor Bill Richardson of New Mexico declared to George Stephanopoulos on This Week that "We need much tougher law enforcement of the border. That is critical, border security. We need to tighten enforcement at the workplace so that individuals, businesses, do not hire illegal aliens... In New Mexico we granted driver's licenses so that we know where they are, who they are, so that we can keep track of them." Bush was all too happy to abide. In June of this year the National Guard will bring 6000 troops to the border. A plan Richardson supports. Driver licenses for undocumented immigrants is a good idea but apparently Gov. Richardson supports it for all the wrong reasons.

Janet Napoliono, Governor of Arizona, called for the Arizona National Guard to be stationed at the state border

in 2005 saying "It seems to me now that there is an appropriate role for them to play." This was a reversal of an earlier rejection of troops at the border. Janet Napoliono's declaration of a "state of emergency" in the same year and her calls to prosecute small business who rely on immigrant labor even had fellow Arizona Democrats calling on her to cool it. According to a January 2006 Tucson citizen article, a Latino Pima County Supervisor Richard Elías had implored her to tone down the rhetoric and wanted to remind Napoliono that "The immigration issue is about a comprehensive solution, not just more law enforcement at the border."

Political analysts are expecting the Republicans to lose some Latino support due the draconian house bill that was passed in 2007 that would have made 12 million undocumented immigrants in the U.S. into felons and made it a crime for non-profits, churches and government agencies to assist them with food, medical care, or other basic services. The Democrat Party establishment believes if it simply takes two steps to the left it'll be seen as a reasonable alternative by Latino voters in the future. But this misses the point. If Democrats don't take a stance against militarization of the border and fences because they're afraid of alienating angry white males in the Minutemen then those growing numbers of Latino voters everyone in Washington's taking about these days could decide to reject both parties. Too often people in the political class imagine that the Democrat and Republican corporate duopoly is the only game in town. The Democrat party establishment may soon find that the voters of color that they're so used to taking for granted may one day pick up their marbles and

either go home or, more hopefully, start another game with new rules.

The Last Temptation of Thomson

Desperate for a conservative savior, Republican Party voters are increasingly attracted to Fred Thomson, the celebrity T.V. actor and former Senator from Tennessee. His poll numbers (in the Summer of 07 he was trailing Rudolph Giuliani by only a few percentage points in national polls) are impressive for someone who hasn't even formerly declared. The question? Should progressives be spooked by a Thomson candidacy? The answer? No. In the words of King George the II- bring it on.

Sad as it is, national presidential elections in the U.S. are much more about marketing than grassroots democracy. Republican political marketers are already working hard to brand Thomson. He's been called Reaganesque. Simple and folksy, yet media savvy. A plain spoken man with bedrock American values and a grown up demeanor. Even the chatter about whether he's "hungry" enough for the White House is part of the manufacture of his allure. Americans love reluctant leaders summoned by circumstance- not ambition- to power.

Thomson represents a familiar archetype in U.S. presidential history. The avuncular and wise avatar of quintessence. After the Second World War Eisenhower projected a calm but confident figure who was above ideology. After the bloodiest war in human history he had great appeal. Ronald Reagan, was an all American cowboy that came to reassert American confidence after the Vietnam war, a prolonged recession and the Iran Hostage Crisis. But his image was soft, removed, and fatherly. Bob Dole who in many ways represented the same type of leadership in 1996,

a time of relative peace and prosperity, was defeated. The lesson? The leader must match the times. Fred falls flat in this regard. The American people are anxious and angry about the Iraq war. According to the latest Roper Poll over 70 percent of the American people believe the country is on the wrong track. Falling real wages and limited access to health care continue to screw workers and the poor.

In one respect Thomson's attraction on the right mirrors Obama's attraction on the so called "left." A significant number of voters want to move on from the historical narcissism and cultural divisions of the Baby Boomers. In the Right's seemingly endless attempts to correct for the cultural shifts of "the sixties", they've displayed the same modernist temperament for radical change and "movement" politics that older conservatives rejected. Thanks to the influence of Chicago school free market ideology and religious right fundamentalism, post 1968 conservatism was transformed from a defender of tradition, folk culture and the authority of church and state to an ideology.

Thomson's allure is that he can be cast as a retreat from boomer intergenerational bitterness. But his sagacious aloofness would be more compelling to the electorate in more settled times. Today, as in 1996, voters are not looking for someone who will protect and defend the status quo. They're looking for someone who will get troops out of Iraq and work to solve problems at home. Breathe easy. The race is still wide open.

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