

# Third Rail

The Award-Winning Political Arts Magazine of the College of Staten Island/CUNY

Spring 2011



*Edward Papp*



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Spring 2011

CSI's only  
award-winning  
student publication

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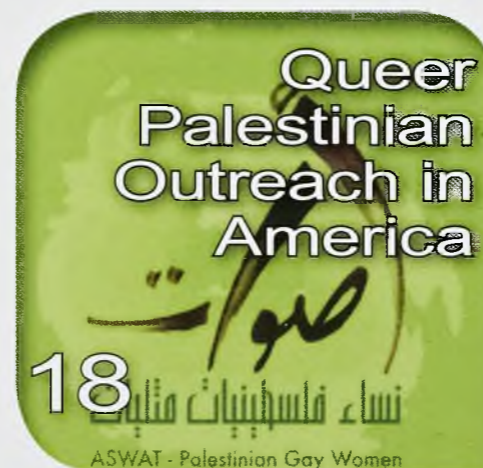
2008 GOLD MEDALIST

The Nation. Ten Papers We Like



Unemployed bitches  
I have three part time jobs dude  
Why can't you get one?

- Anonymous



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## Dedicated to the memory of Professor Steven Stearns

“We don’t have to engage in grand,  
heroic actions to participate  
in the process of change.  
Small acts,  
when multiplied by millions of people,  
can transform the world.”

Howard Zinn

# Third Rail

EDITORIAL

Open Letter Spring 2011







ignorant jack-asses. The building is the Muslim equivalent of a Jewish Community Center (a JCC), whose purpose is to help the community and to put out an olive branch of understanding, so that we can stop equating the actions of the few to the whole. What did many people do in response? They formed mental images of things akin to our cover, seeing the whole affair as a larger action to subvert America via weekend terrorist cooking classes or some such nonsense.

It was not till after we had gone to print that we realized that maybe we had not made our position clear that we are against hate. I dissented and figured that anyone who had read the magazine and the position of many of the staff would have realized what our stance was. This led to a discussion of why people are Islamophobic, to this I responded with: why are people racist in general? There is something to say about the way the media hypes and frightens us (especially a certain "news" channel that is only fair and balanced if you are somewhere to the right of Mussolini). Far too many Americans are convinced that the people of the Arab world (a better word is needed since many non-Arab countries get lumped into that, Iran is a notable example) are villains right out of *Fu Manchu*.

That is why we did the cover, if you believe something like what is depicted on it... you should be ashamed for believing something incredibly ridiculous and for holding racist orientalist feelings. In the mid 1950s the Ku Klux Klan was enjoying a surge of popularity when the nascent Civil Rights movement began to heat up. Besides the various Counter Intelligence Program (or Co-Intel-Pro) operations that the FBI performed against them, one notable superhero did as well, Superman. At the time Superman had a radio play (which were very popular and I sadly miss in our modern world) and in one episode, Superman fought the KKK. The radio play accurately presented concepts the KKK believed in and terms like Klavern, what a local



chapter of Klansmen are called and that the leaders of these various chapters are called Wizards. After this particular episode aired, there was a notable decline in membership in the KKK. How did Superman actually harm the Klan in real life? By presenting how ridiculous and terrible they really were. With this in mind I will not apologize for our cover, nor should any member of *Third Rail*; if you saw the cover and were offended by it, and didn't actually read the magazine to gain the context, you are the one who is wrong.

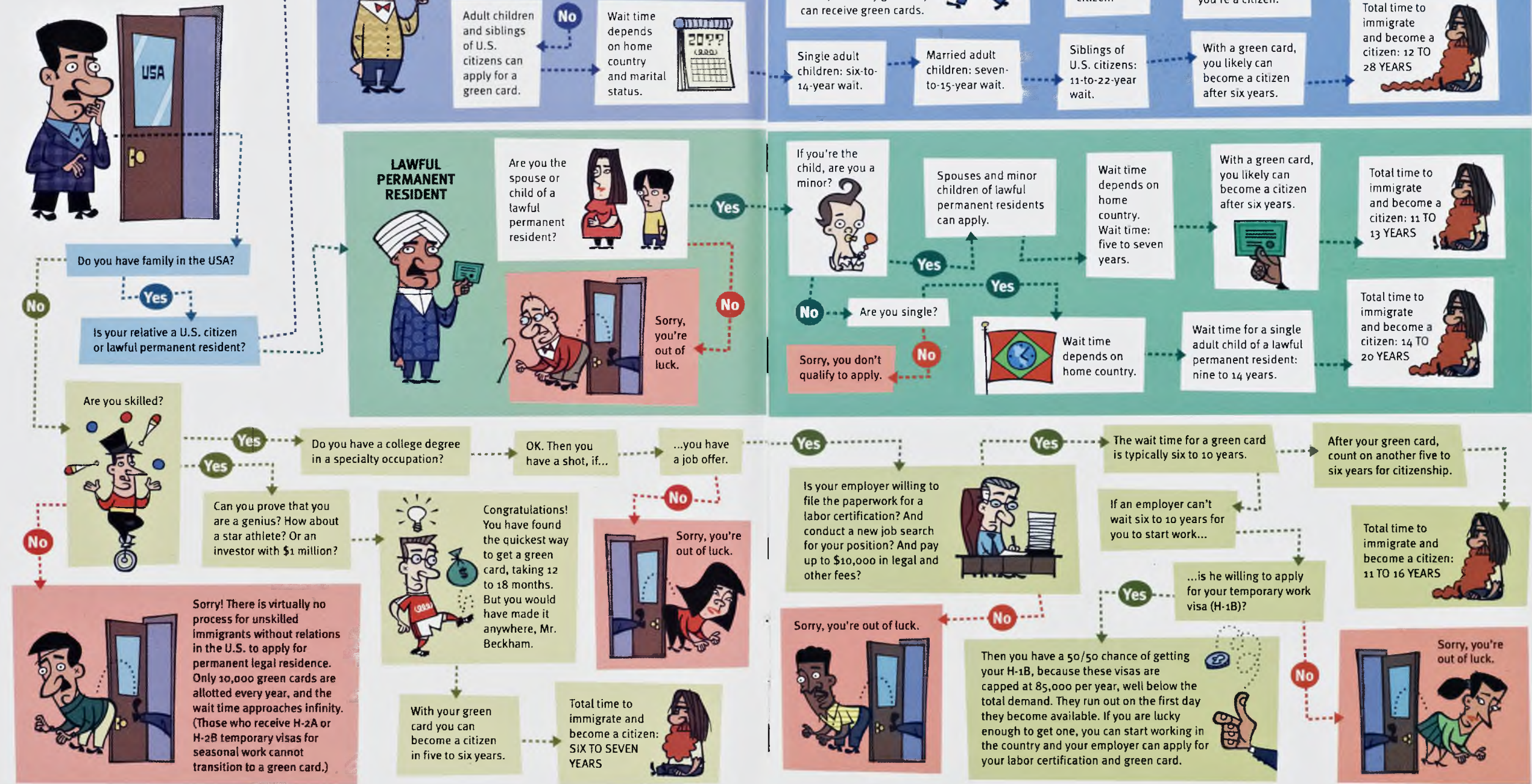
I would like to switch gears now, and make a correction in regard to our previous



# What Part of Legal Immigration Don't You Understand? Mike Flynn and Shikha Dalmia

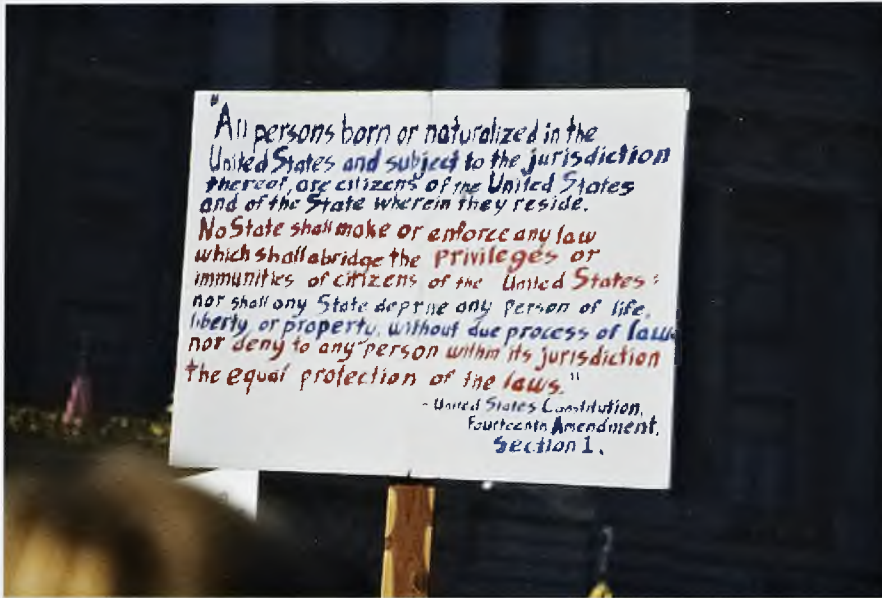
Illustrated by Terry Colon

Opponents of illegal immigration are fond of telling foreigners to "get in line" before coming to work in America. But what does that line actually look like, and how many years (or decades) does it take to get through? Try it yourself!



(Flynn is director of government affairs and Dalmia is a senior policy analyst at Reason Foundation. This chart was developed by Reason Foundation in collaboration with the National Foundation for American Policy.)

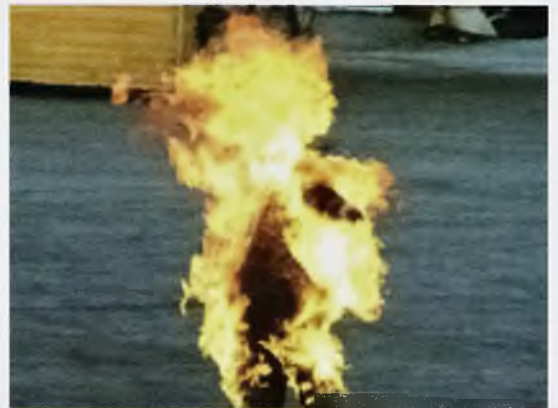




issue. We carried an article that was on, yet another unintelligible proposition, "Anchor Babies". The facts in the article are wrong, just ashamedly so, much to my great embarrassment that I allowed it to be printed. Immigration into the U.S does not work that way and is hardly as easy as people think it is. For one: illegal parents who give birth to a baby born in the US who then gained citizenship, by the same way many of us got it (being lucky to be born here) don't get to stay and are often either deported back to where they came from with or without their child. There is much that needs to

change when it comes to US immigration policy, and a corner stone of that is amnesty. Let's face it, there are an estimated twelve million illegal immigrants in the United States. We lack the resources, facilities, and manpower to "round them all up", which if you did not get the subtle hint, would require the infrastructure of a concentration camp system. Which, no matter what, is always wrong (Good God how far have we fallen that this has to be stated)? Now some people have recommended a repeal of the 14th Amendment in order to stop the phantom threat of anchor babies, which is about as good an idea as shooting yourself in the head. This notion is so goddamn absurd, short sighted, historically uninformed, insane, ridiculous, idiotic and so very, very, very stupid that these people should have been laughed out of a mental asylum. Instead they are elected to Congress, which may or may not be the same as a mental asylum. These people are treated as proper statesmen, instead of having the stupid beat out of them. We're screwed.

With that thought in mind let us return to the present (or as such it is as the time of this writing). We have seen a great many shocks occur in the world over the last few months. In December, a young college educated man living in Tunisia, looking at the despair of his life as an underemployed educated person tired of living in horrid economic conditions, killed himself by setting himself on fire. This one incident, this one single incident sparked civil unrest across North Africa and the Middle East, from Morocco to Bahrain, from Syria to Yemen, people have swarmed to the streets. They protest and demand an end to the autocratic regimes that have long oppressed them and gained





wealth by exploiting them.

Most notable is the revolution in Egypt. It has driven out a US backed dictator that has held power since the early 1980s. The regime has been driven out by the people tired of poor economic conditions, of being repressed and a desire for democracy. Protestors took to the streets and battled the State Internal Security, while the army was racked with their own internal conflicts of who to back. The army after deciding that the situation could go on no longer took action and forced Mubarak to step down.



Protest in Tahrir Square on January 31, 2011

Egypt isn't in the clear just yet. With the military in control, and every single leader of Egypt since Nasser having come from the military, we have to wonder how democratic the new Egypt will be. At this time it is unknowable, but the determination that the people of Egypt have shown in their strive for democracy, I have high hopes for them and the rest of the world. The Arab autocracies across the region are trying to readjust and mitigate their problems, which isn't working too well, since (as of this writing) 'good old crazy Uncle Mummar' doesn't look like he's going to be holding onto Libya for very much longer. The people of Bahrain clash with the police in the street, though the king has offered everyone a yearly five thousand dollar bribe. In response to the wave of democracy attempting to sweep away the autocrats: the dictators, despots, and butchers of Africa have been trying to crack down on revolts before they can start there too. With all



the vigor I can muster, I hope they fail. Every regime from the Congo to China, to Latin America, and Europe, wherever despots may call home and try to keep it that way, they will fail. The tide of democracy can not be kept back for long and the tighter the autocrats squeeze the more of them will break upon the will of the people yearning for freedom.



Bernard Lewis: during an interview with David Horowitz of the *JPost*, he states that Arabs are not ready for democracy.

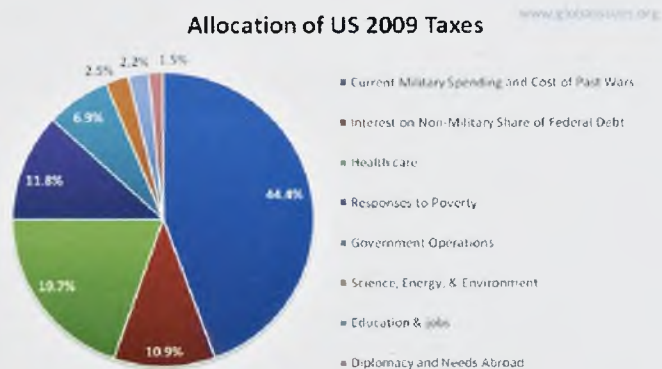
I would like to quickly talk about America's role in this. America should not be the center of attention, as we oft like to make ourselves. These are still domestic issues that these countries have to deal with. We should be questioning the continuing of the despicable Cold War policies that have led us to support and in cases install, these despots. While the people of these nations wish to break free from oppression, people fight and die in the streets for their freedom and human rights. Many Americans and pundits proclaim that these people aren't ready for democracy! **Aren't ready for democracy!?** Such bullshit lines can only come from the borderline racist

American conservative pundits. To tell these people, who want to decide how they live and enjoy freedom that they aren't ready for democracy because they might elect people who aren't friendly to Western exploitation; is not defending democracy, its promoting imperialism. Many people in America wonder why so many people around the world hate us, well maybe if we changed our foreign policies to stop openly supporting dictators who oppress, murder, and torture their own population maybe we wouldn't be so reviled.

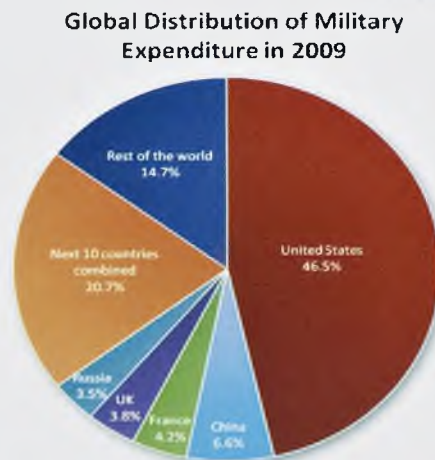
It does make me think though, in the Middle East and the rest of the world, people are reacting to these harsh economic times, and disasters wrought upon us by Neo-Liberal free market economics by opposing austerity and taking to the street. In London, students ransacked the Tory party headquarters at the idea of increasing tuition. What have we done in the US? We've had protests defending the 'right' of the Capital class to exploit the Working class, to undermine the proletariat in the gains we have made by trying to drive the final nail in the coffin of Unions, and advocating reducing democracy by repealing the direct election of senators. While the average American worker feels the increasing pinch of these times, the Capital class and its minions have sought to further their agenda by cutting needed social programs, while expanding the already bloated Military-Industrial Complex. Though the Tea Party is allegedly putting defense up on the chopping block as well, that remains to be seen. With the way conservatives are in this country, money that's devoted to caring for wounded and mentally-disturbed veterans would get cut, while weapons programs



designed to fight a country that doesn't exist anymore go ahead unimpeded.



Source: Friends Committee on National Legislation, July 2008



Source: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute Yearbook 2010. (US figures from Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation, May 2010)

All one has to do is look at the debacle surrounding the F-22 Raptor, the first actual stealth fighter/bomber. It is a plane that could be used to support ground troops in battle, but couldn't fly at night or in any bad weather and that makes it just about useless. But trying to get the program scrapped or even to cut the number of planes ordered has been like pulling teeth. Meanwhile, cutting federal funding to Planned Parenthood and other health services, education, NASA, the National Endowment of the Arts, the sciences (the NEA and NES respectively) and PBS has been....well, its been so easy I lack a simile or metaphor to properly describe it.

I have written this before, but it bears repeating. The problems City, State and Federal governments are going through aren't ones of bloated budgets but are revenue problems. For the last thirty years we have been following the Grover Norquist model of government is that government should be so small, it can be drowned in a bathtub. If we keep electing people who think that government has no place in society, should we be surprised that we have seen a dramatic decrease in the ability of government to function? When one staffs the National Labor Board with people who think the only rights Labour has is to shut up and take whatever management decides to give you, is it a surprise that we see that people are faring economically worse then they were thirty years ago? When we staff government with people who think that taxes are always evil no matter what, and should never be raised, should we be surprised that Americans have a worse social safety net and worse social mobility than our counterparts in Europe? We have seen the wages of American's stagnate or decline since the mid 1970s, the cost of living has skyrocketed to about 3 times that in 1976. This



means that people are still making just about, if not a little less, today than in 1976. Meanwhile everything costs more so people have less and less money to spend. This problem was neatly hidden for the last twenty years by how easy it is to get credit. Right now the only sector of the American economy that is growing is low paying service sector jobs. The US has the military of a Superpower, but the economy of a Third World Banana Republic.



This is of course out of the norm, since the New Deal wages had roughly kept pace with the cost of living. As the push for deregulation and Reaganomics gained steam, we see a reversal of this trend. As of right now (early 2011) America has such a disparity in the distribution of wealth that we haven't seen since the heyday of the Robber Barons and the Gilded Age. There are many things that need to be done, but the two that I've been trying to get at are wages and taxes, wages need to be readjusted, the only way to do this is to bring jobs back to the US and away from the cheap slave labour markets of East Asia, Central and South America. By raising tariffs on imported goods, end NAFTA, and strengthen the labour unions to advocate for workers rights, we can bring back jobs. The second thing, is to raise taxes (by a hell of a lot on the rich) but at varying degrees for everyone, so that we can properly fund our social safety net and the programs that benefit everyone, not just the wealthy.

Why would we want a properly funded social safety net? Without getting into the moral question of is it ok for one to sit in

the lap of luxury while millions starve in the streets, not having one negatively affects all of us. Our lack of a universal healthcare system, like every other First World industrialized nation in the world, has led to American workers being healthier than their counterparts elsewhere. America's "pay to play" healthcare system is far more expensive while delivering "fewer bangs for the buck" than universal healthcare systems. Businesses are able to operate more freely and profitably since they do not have to provide for the healthcare of their workers (even with the higher taxes).





Ok, so Universal Healthcare may not be a direct care for you, the 18-25 year old student who is going to live forever. If I may remind you, the College of Staten Island is a CUNY, a City University of New York. Meaning a vast majority of our funding comes from the City, followed by State and Federal funding, with the tuition we pay making up a small fragment of it, well relatively small. But if the City, State and Federal government cut funding to CUNY, it will require a raise in tuition in a bid to cover the budget gap. This means it costs more to come here, which means less and less people are able to afford an education, i.e. us, the students. This is why we have so many issues here at CSI and (well I can't speak from experience only from extrapolation) other CUNY's.



If you head over to the south side of campus at night, in between buildings 2S and 3S is one light post what is noticeably brighter than the (few) ones around it. The difference between this lamp-post and the others around it is it is lit by high-powered LEDs. LED lights are much brighter than standard bulbs used for these types of purposes as well as thirty percent more energy efficient and have a longer usage life. The downside to these LED lights is that they are expensive. The lights would make the campus after dark safer, and save the school money since less energy has to be expended to actually sufficiently light the campus. Let's not discuss the maintenance issues on campus, from buildings falling apart with gaping holes in their ceilings, to broken emergency doors and roofs that leak like a sieve in the slightest of rainstorms; hell, these are full blown articles all by themselves.

The condition of CSI is a microcosm in the United States; our infrastructure is falling apart. The only way to fix this is by resisting the neo-liberal economics pushed by the conservatives in this country and fight for one that functions. Maybe we as Americans should be looking to the Middle East to fix our crumbling democracy.

As Ever

Comrade Mike.



# The Michigan YouTube Case and American Culture

By: Jesse Yu

When I read about some aspects of American culture I feel like banging my head against a wall. Sometimes I'm ashamed to be an American. Many Western democracies, like those in Europe and Canada, have adopted lax censorship laws to keep up with the changing times. Certain parts of America, however, still cling to their puritanical origins. Perhaps they hope that if they stick their collective fingers in their ears and yell really loudly, they can still pretend that it is the 1950s and nothing has changed from that time. Upon reading of the controversy over George Carlin's 1972 routine "Seven Dirty Words," feelings of disgust overwhelmed me. Forty years after Carlin's routine, the same feelings of disgust stirred within me over an online article.

This story concerned a 21 year old Michigan resident who is facing felony charges which could land him 20 years in jail. What did he do to deserve this hard time in prison? Sell drugs? Armed robbery or burglary? Rape? Commit assault or murder? The truth is he did none of the above. Instead, Evan Emory was arrested and arraigned for posting a video on YouTube. No joke, the local prosecutor has charged him with "manufacturing child sexual abusive materials," aka producing virtual child pornography, for posting a video on the internet.



Evan Emory Playing the Guitar from the YouTube video in question

How did this happen, you ask? Back in January, Emory got permission from a local elementary school to film a class of first graders as he sang a song to them. He did so, filming their reactions as he sang an innocuous song about a lunch lady to them. However, once the first graders had left the room, Emory then filmed himself singing a sexually explicit song in the same room. He then spliced the two videos together to make it seem like he was singing the sexually explicit song to the grade-schoolers. He then posted the video to YouTube and showed it at a local open mic night at a club. The trouble started when the parents of the children featured in the video heard about it being shown at that club and that it had been posted on YouTube. Those parents brought it to the attention of the principal of the elementary school, who later informed the county prosecutor's office. Emory was arrested and charged soon after.

My first reaction to hearing about this was shocked disbelief. A guy being arrested for posting a video on YouTube, and charged with a felony that carried a 20 year sentence? That couldn't be true! Not in this day and age! It had to be some sort of mistake. As I read more about the case, I understood that things like this still happen in this country. My next reaction was anger at the utter stupidity of this case. A charge that carried a 20 year sentence being leveled at a guy who does the same thing that the late night comedians get paid to do every night on their television shows? Why not arrest Letterman and Leno, Stewart and Colbert, Conan and Fallon for doing the exact same thing? Why not prosecute the producers, directors, and actors associated with television shows on Comedy Central who do the same thing? Some may say that these ex-



amples are ineligible for prosecution due to the release forms that the parents of the children who appear on these shows inexorably have to sign, but what is the real difference between the two? The failure to obtain a release form is a civil matter, not a criminal one that necessitates an arrest for a crime equivalent to creating child pornography!

The stupidity of the prosecutor in this case also amazes me. Tony Tague, the prosecutor in question, is determined to take this case to trial. He is refusing to dismiss the charges even after being presented with the original two videos in their unedited forms before being spliced together. Instead, he has decided to move ahead with the prosecution, charging Emory with a statute that makes it a crime to create material that presents *even the appearance of children being abused*. Said statute classifies said material as child pornography. Tague apparently wants to make an example of Emory, as evidenced by him going for the child pornography charge. A conviction would require Emory to register as a sex offender, something that would stick with and negatively impact the rest of his life. While Emory has been released on bond, due to the nature of the charges, he is not allowed to have contact with children until the trial. It seems obvious to me as well as a majority of those who have read the story, that these charges are basically trumped up bullshit. There was a Supreme Court ruling in 2002 that stated virtual representations of children being abused do not constitute child pornography. A recall campaign for Tague is gathering steam, based off of this and other perceived abuses of power. Supporters of Emory, including the (in)famous group known as Anonymous, have performed acts of cyber-vigilantism against Tague's actions such as: spamming his voicemail, email, his office fax machines, and taking down his website for a time.

However, some in the area and around the country seem to think that the charges are justified, judging by the reactions from angry parents and the back and forth on the comments sections of the news websites reporting on this story and its subsequent follow-ups. There has been talk of a generational divide between those who grew up with the internet and those who are older. Many in the younger generation believe that Emory's actions were a joke done in bad taste, compared to those of the older generation who believe that Emory should be prosecuted to the full extent of the law. Some of those who are supporting Tague in his prosecution of Emory have accused supporters of Emory of being unfit to raise children because they see nothing criminal about his actions.

Reactions like this remind me of the sorry cultural state of this country. For those who don't believe that this country is in such a sorry state, consider that America has the lowest percentage of public acceptance of the Theory of Evolution in the First World. Consider that we live in a country where atheists are considered the least trustworthy minority group by the population at large and where being one is a liability in any election. This is a country where the Parents Television Council can attempt to dictate what gets shown on TV and levy fines based off of their religious views using mail-in campaigns to the FCC. Sometimes I wish I lived in either Canada or Western Europe so I wouldn't have to deal with all this cultural bullshit. While I do feel pretty insulated from all of that craziness living here in New York, I am constantly reminded that all I need to do is head west or south and I might as well be in a different country, as cultural norms change.



# A Normal New York Republican?

By: Earl Gatchalian

Ever since NYPIRG handed me a voting form back in 2000, I've become an active voter. I've also been right about 66% of the time in the presidential election. I am a republican.

Already there should be thoughts of me being an idiot, or super religious, hating the rights of colored people and women, and just generally a guy you wouldn't want to talk to. I am none of these things, with the exception of being an idiot, probably because I vote for the GOP every time knowing my state would always support the opposite. Am I a conservative? Yes. Am I a bit liberal on things? Yes. Do I want my country to work? Of course. Do I hate democrats? Are they calling me an idiot? If yes, then who wouldn't hate an asshole who calls complete strangers idiots?

Growing up on Staten Island and being a part of an Asian family has skewed my political values a bit. My mother and father are both very religious Catholics because they come from the Philippines. To anyone unfamiliar with that place, it is the third largest catholic country in the world behind Brazil and Mexico. Almost seventy four million people out of ninety two million are Catholic. We also have a ceremony on Easter where people literally nail themselves to crosses. I can't say I agree with the practice but who am I to judge the devout? But, before you go and google me passing out communion wafers I like the rest of you do not go that far into the religion. I do go every Sunday I'm available, tithe two US dollars and proceed to have a hefty dinner and plan the rest of my week. Also my best friend is Jewish and I was the best man at his Jewish wedding. He's a casual communist and an unregistered voter. I think I chose my company well.

I'm a colored person. Living in NY, the Republicans here wouldn't want to really mess with us, pretty much because we outnumber everyone. Other states say some pretty insensitive things, but I doubt they'd want to openly tell us to return to making railroads and picking cotton (we have machines that do that now) if we outnumbered them. The crazy republicans in the other states do not represent me. They will never represent me. I don't vote for them, nor would. I think people forget that states are like little countries with their own laws, populations, and cultures. They are closed minded enough to think every state should be exactly like their own state. How could that be possible? That would be one boring place to live. (North Korea)

Women's rights, are they still fighting for more? Aren't they equal by now? If I looked at a big corporation and they decided to pay women less, who am I to say no to that? If I elect a mayor or republican president, is it their job to send a mass email to big companies to make women get paid more? My opinion on abortion is that I have no opinion. I have no opinion because I am a man. If a woman wants to kill a fetus, it's up to her to decide what value that fetus has. Will I want to pay for the abortion with my tax dollars should there be some universal health care initiative? No, because I don't want my money killing someone else's baby. What if that baby were to save the world and fifty cents of my tax money kills that particular kid? When I die God will look at me and say, "Dude, you know you helped kill my son right?" "Was it that abortion I made my girlfriend get after the prom?" "No." "What about the abortion from the girl I was going out with my sophomore year of college?" "Not that one." "Oh wait how about the girl I was with while working at the United Nations. She went back to Korea and got an abortion there. Does that count? I mean that

wasn't even in the same country." "No Earl it was Michael Reed, son of Marcy Thompson." "Well who the hell is that?" "Strike two." "Oh God Damn it." "Strike three, express elevator downstairs." "Fuck me." "For the rest of eternity." I did march at one of those pro life rallies because my mom wanted me to go and my dad was worried that she was going to be assaulted in Washington DC. I honestly didn't care. I did get a free sandwich out of it.

When I was born here I was shipped back to the Philippines. I lived on a farm and was taught English while I was over there. My grandfather was a World War 2 veteran, who was an air traffic controller for the U.S. Navy whose purpose at the time was to turn the Japanese into ash. The Gatchalian family was a coalition of Scientists and Engineers, but a lot of the children went into military service. The military service gave my cousins the chance to not do what their parents wanted them to do. To live their own lives. They have families and some of the cutest kids you'd ever see. Do I enjoy war? Some people say we republicans love war more than anyone. I would never want to see my relatives put into the line of fire under any circumstance. We spend tons of money on the giant American war machine, and how can we not support those purchases when our beloved cousins, brothers, sisters, sons are embedded into that lifestyle? If I ever raised my hand to go against money towards the military, it feels like one less steel patch protecting my family members. It's kinda like a hostage crisis if you think about it. If the media tells me that there is an atomic weapon somewhere in the world in the hands of a country that wants to use it against us, why wouldn't we want to use what we believe is the most sophisticated military force in the world to deal with it? During the Gulf war in Kuwait against Iraq the entire coalition lost 392 people out of the 960,000 involved. I accept the responsibility for my vote, but then am I responsible for voting for Bush even knowing he wasn't going to get the state of NY's electoral votes?

I don't think I'm a Republican anymore (I'm still registered but you know on the inside, not really), but I don't want to be a democrat because they just don't have the morality I have. But when Democrats call Republicans stupid, that's just uncalled for. If you call a person stupid every single day, they are going to shoot you in the face. As a kid who grew up in public school, I could totally understand. It's what happens when education reform ignores you and colored people don't mingle. When a place isn't as diverse as ours, it just seems alien. They're just following what the "evil" people in charge of that state make them believe, and we are made to believe the crazy things we believe in. You need to realize we are all trapped. We can follow whatever party we want to and still nothing will get done. These party loyalties, the fantasy that we're all made to believe and join is keeping us from coming together and doing what we should've done during the Alan Greenspan years. Fire everyone involved in our government. We no longer control them with elections because they are paid off by giant corporations to exploit us. We are told to work much harder for less money but there are so many corporations making record profits. How can you focus when you're attached to the different foreign nations we're fighting with or Charlie Sheen? You can't just remain blind forever.

Please, we need to simply respect each other, and wait for the right opportunity to show them that we won't be manipulated by them anymore. All of these rich politicians on top, they do not care about you no matter how much they say they do.



# Queer Palestinian Outreach in America

By: Nadia Kader

On February 10th, 2011, I was lucky enough to attend the Palestinian Queer Activists forum at the CUNY Grad Center. The two representatives of queer Palestinian women were Haneen and Ghadir, from alQaws: For Sexual and Gender Diversity in Palestinian Society and ASWAT: Palestinian Gay Women, respectively. Because of the danger the activists face if they could be identified back home, no photos or video could be taken. Katherine Acey, founding Executive Director of The Astraea Lesbian Fund for Justice, and lesbian Arab activist, moderated the event.

ASWAT, formed in 2002, is the first Queer Women's organization located in the Palestinian territories. Two lesbians met in an online chat room and were shocked to discover that they were both Palestinian. Palestinian society is deeply homophobic. In fact, until they met, each of these women had believed that she was the only queer Palestinian woman in the world. After much anxiety, the two decided to meet in person and the group expanded from there to become what is now known as ASWAT, a place where queer women can meet in a safe and supportive space. Contrary to popular belief, homosexuality is not criminalized in Palestinian society. Palestine, Egypt and Lebanon are the only three countries in the region that do not criminalize homosexuality. However, homosexuality is not spoken of at all. Queer individuals living in these regions do not feel comfortable being "out," therefore, ASWAT does most of their work underground. "Queer Palestinian Law is not the case; it is the society that needs to be changed," declared Ghadir.

Haneen, who represented alQaws, is openly gay in her hometown of Jerusalem. alQaws started in 2001 as a grassroots, community-based organization that works with LGBTQ Palestinians throughout Israel and Palestinian occupied territories. Ghadir lives in a self described "gray area," where she is closeted at home and to certain friends. She explored her sexuality in college and is open in the workplace.

One of the issues discussed was "pinkwashing." Homosexuality is not illegal in Palestine, per se, but because Palestinian society is so homophobic, queer Palestinians face many issues of oppression at home. In response to this, Israel has initiated the so-called pinkwashing campaign; an effort to paint itself as a queer-friendly nation in order to distract attention from the Palestinian "problem." Israel is trying to divide the Palestinian population by seducing this particular minority, presumably in the hopes that queer Palestinians will speak out in the international community in favor of their good treatment by Israel.

However, the Palestinian queer community has not been fooled. They are, first and foremost, Palestinian. They have suffered under an Israeli naval blockade, which has prevented international aid from reaching them. They have watched job opportunities taken from them and given to foreign-born immigrants. They have endured walls and checkpoints and armed soldiers limiting their movements and hindering their opportunities. As Haneen said to the audience, "I don't know why the sexuality of the soldier standing at the checkpoint matters. It's that he's there at all that matters."

A major problem that all Palestinians face is occupation. Because of the daily struggle for equal rights in Israeli occupied Palestine, the Queer movement has not been able to get the necessary attention. "Occupation hinders any form of activism...occupation ends, then feminism and women's rights, then maybe Queer rights." Ghadir also urged the audience to visit the occupied territories to see for themselves what it is like under Israeli control.

Before I visited the Palestinian territories, I never had any interest in my ethnicity. I only identified as an Arab when people asked me "what I was." During my visit, I witnessed countless acts of oppression by Israeli soldiers against Palestinian people. I learned that Palestinian people in the territories were not allowed to pass checkpoints into Israel without permits, could not use certain roads and highways that Israelis used, and had to have different colored license plates on their cars. Also, the checkpoints made traveling a real hassle; what should take about an hour traveling from work to home and vice versa took three hours or more. I once walked through a checkpoint, went shopping for over an hour, came back to discover that the same people were waiting to get into the city. The line had not moved at all and nobody was being searched. The soldiers were keeping them in line for their own amusement.

The event was packed; at least seventy-five people were turned away because the room was at capacity. The audience learned more from those two hours about occupied Palestine and Queer Palestinians than they could have from any news channel. They were able to talk to the people who live there, the people who face oppression and discrimination every day single day. It was truly inspirational to see their courage and resolve. Sarah Schulman, Distinguished Professor of the Humanities at the College of Staten Island, who helped organize and raised money for the tour, had this to say; "Their oppression is so immense and yet they managed to integrate resistance to occupation with feminism and Queer desire, and I think this is so inspiring. They are so far ahead of us."





# Interview With SG

By: Michael Miley

I sat down with the President of Student Government for an interview. Here it is:



Student Government President:  
Jolanta Smulski

**Third Rail: My first question, as a student, what do you believe the role of student government should be?**

Jolanta Smulski: Well, the easiest way to answer that question would be by thinking about before I actually got involved with Student Government. To be honest, I didn't really care about Student Government because I didn't think it actually did anything. I saw some signs about some scholarships, and I knew that they donated \$20,000 a year for students to buy textbooks, but I didn't really know anything; the kind of administration they have, how well they promote themselves, if they really put themselves out there to the students. I don't think that the Student Government at the time was doing that. So I didn't recognize them at all.



**TR: Before you joined you knew we had a student government, even though it wasn't really public. Did you have an idea about what role Student Government should hold in the hierarchy of the school?**

JS: Definitely. I felt that Student Government should really represent students by being in constant contact with faculty and administration and students; by maintaining a dialogue between all three groups. It's hard to maintain that communication between all three groups, especially when the faculty and the administration don't get along.

**TR: Now, as the Student Government President, what do you think the role of student government should be?**

JS: When I joined Student Government, I wanted actually three things. One was to get more students involved. Number two, to change the constitution because I think it is very limiting, it limits our role [Student Government's] entirely. Three, to push for the Student Activity Fee to be increased. Which is kind of controversial. I recognize that a lot of very important groups are funded by the Student Activity Fee, and are not sustainable by the current Student Activity Fee. I would hate to see less sports teams, less group fitness classes offered. I would hate to see less clubs, or for the Health & Wellness center to shut down, or the Child Care Center. It's a tragedy how the economy is affecting us at CSI. That's something I'm really passionate about.

**TR: You said you would like to see more student involvement. How would you like to see the student body get more involved?**

JS: Well I would like to model things after what Baruch College is doing. The way they utilize Facebook is amazing! They have two different groups. one, called USG of Baruch, and then another one called Party With Baruch. they both have a thousand or more members. They have so many people interacting with them online. The USG Facebook group posts videos of their meetings, interviews with the different officers, And the Party with Baruch, is run by two people who take pictures of events. They kind of make it like a hip thing to go to an event; you'll be photographed, you'll see your picture on face-



book, you know what I mean? It allows people to visualize what these events are like, and it makes them want to be part of it. I would love to see that kind of involvement here, and the way they pushed that was through social media.

**TR: Do you think we have such little involvement in this school because we are considered a commuter school?**

**JS:** Yeah, sure. If we had dorms students would stay on campus and go to these events. They would start clubs, they would get involved, they would go to a game. Stuff like that. So that definitely plays

a huge factor. I know that if there were more people who were more interested in getting students involved, then it could definitely happen.

**TR: Do you also think that the things that do happen on campus aren't very well advertised? For example, Student Government hosted a contest for a mural in the Game-Room, but I had heard that it was canceled because only one person had submitted a design.**

**JS:** Oh no, it wasn't canceled! We actually had two submissions af-

ter a period of about a month. We had two competing ones. I don't know who the winner is yet, but we saw the designs and they were excellent.



International Dance Night 2010

**TR: What do you think would be a good way for Student Government and the college in general to advertise the events that go on here? Often, we won't hear about an event until the day after it has happened.**

JS: Yeah, that's right. That happened to me a lot, until I started researching all the events myself. Basically, I would take my planner, I would go on CSItoday.com, CFAshows.com, collegiatelink.net and CSIdolphins.com and I would just fill up my planner. It wasn't easy. Everything is spread out, and I thought *what if I did this for everybody? What if I made this cool calendar where I could compile all these different websites together, and just give it to people? Tell them where they can get concrete details about events.* That's how Time Out CSI was born. The Student Government Newsletter.

**TR: The Office of Student Life has two TVs facing the entrance of the Campus Center. Can the various clubs and organizations get a flyer that can be displayed on those TVs as advertisements?**

JS: Clubs actually can submit a flyer, and Greg Brown [in the Office of Student Life, 1C-201] will put it on the screens down there. The problem is whether the clubs do that or not. It's up to each individual entity to do that or not.

**TR: Do you feel that the current Student Government Constitution is limiting?**

JS: Yes, yes it is. Mostly, it has to do with how people are elected. I can't begin to tell you how much I hate losing people on Student Government! The main issue is that we have these 25 positions, yet, in order to replace people, we have to wait months according to the constitution. If we lose people between June and October, we have to wait all the way till November to elect new people to fill those positions.

**TR: Really, there's no provision for an emergency election?**

JS: No! And if we lose people between November and February, we have to wait till February to fill those seats. If we lose some seats in February after the mid-term elections, then those seats will stand empty. I think that's ridiculous! It should be just like CSI Association, where if you lose the



person, then whoever [was the] runner up in the general election takes that seat. It should be that way. But it doesn't work that way. I don't know what the people who drew up the Constitution were thinking. Can you believe that [Student Government's] Constitution was just approved by the Board of Trustees? They drew it five, six years ago! I can't believe that there's such a gap that the current Student Government has to deal with what people wanted back then. You know what I mean? It just hurts our ability to get things done, or to hold quorum for meetings. That's the most important thing that needs to be changed.

**TR: Any other things about the constitution you find limiting?**

JS: A lot of people find that how the seats are proportioned, Freshman vs. Sophomore vs. Senior, also Graduate Students, they don't like it. For example, I don't think it's enough to just have one Grad-student represent the entire program. I know that the current Graduate Senator has told me he feels like he doesn't have any peer support, because we don't know what he's going through. We don't know what it's like for a grad student to pay for Graduate School, or to try to find the funds for that. It's a completely different ball game than it is for Bachelor's Degrees. I wish we could have one more grad student.

**TR: You mentioned the proposed increase of the Student Activity Fee which is a very controversial subject. Would it effectively require a tuition increase?**

JS: No. It's completely independent of the tuition. The Student Activity Fee for full time students is seventy four dollars. As you know, the Board of Trustees increased the tuition by five percent. That's what's changed; the Student Activity Fee didn't change at all. It's completely independent; it actually hasn't changed in eleven years, which is why it's not sustainable. And it can only be increased every ten years. The next Student Activity Fee increase you would see, if it happens this year, is in ten years from now.

**TR: What do you think would be a good target number to have the Student Activity Fee increased to?**

JS: Personally, I think it should be raised by twenty five dollars. The Student Activity Fee is proportioned by group, right? Each has a certain percentage; Sports & Recreation gets the most, Student Government .... I don't know if we actually get the second most, but it's somewhere up there. Then you have Child Care, Health & Wellness, Clubs, CAB, etc. A solid increase, and all the groups would get the help they need. We'd all be able to continue. We have some really excellent programs that WSIA radio, what they're doing for students is amazing! They're letting students work in a radio station, and learn about radio stations; DJing, music technology, music engineering. I don't know how many other CUNYs have that. That's just awesome. I think that makes us very unique to have such a great opportunity. So I wouldn't want to see the radio station shut down.

**TR: There are a lot of programs that Student Government offers to help the student body, such as scholarships. Please, tell us more about them?**

JS: We have scholarships that are offered through the academic departments, and we've increased the number of scholarships this year to nine. This time there are nine different academic departments that are giving these scholarships. What basically happens is that the faculty of that department determines a student that is doing extremely well in their classes, and awards that student the scholarship. Also, we do essay contests through the different commissions; Student Services, Academic & Co-Curricular Affairs especially. Students have to just submit essays, and the contests are excellent. They can be up to a thousand dollars towards your tuition, and it's not just a blank check. It does go towards your tuition, and if you're graduating you do get the money too.

**TR: These scholarships, there's a limited number and they only tend to benefit a small portion of the student body. What does Student Government do for the student body as a whole? What programs are there for everybody else?**

JS: What we actively do through the commissions is organize a whole series of events in collaboration with the Office of Student Life and CAB. Every month we have some events going on, and we invite the whole student body to participate. We also welcome students to come to our meetings,



because we always want their input directly. We want them to be part of the discussion, be part of the conversation and tell us what's missing. Actually, a section in the newsletter that I started is called "Dear SG." It's very simple and to the point; we get love letters and hate mail. That's what I like to call it. We get letters about the coffee hour which we offer every single night of the week; free coffee to all students. If they're taking day classes, night classes, it doesn't matter. If they're on campus, they can drop by. Sometimes we even have food, and students love writing about it. We get so many letters about it. We're always connecting students to different clubs, different organizations on campus. We are the ones who help students start a club in the first place, and we help students create a group for them. We don't discriminate; you can start any kind of club you want, as long as it follows the rules. It has to be open to all students and you have to have at least five officers and ten members. That's it. We actually fund a lot of different programs on campus that are not organized by our office. The Finance Commission gets proposals every month for things like the new student orientation, I know over the years we've sponsored a lot of cultural events on campus. So whenever we get proposals from students, we help them do it. We provide a great service to students.

### **TR: What are your views on student rights?**

**JS:** I don't think we have a problem with student rights, but we do definitely need to push for improvements in them. For example, helping students change a grade that they think is unfair, or helping students communicate with the different Department Chairs about trying to pursue their major by more than just taking classes. Like doing research, writing thesis papers with a professor they are unable to do alone. Also, I really think that the Registrar and Academic Advisement, those two offices need to improve. Students complain to me all the time that they have so much trouble registering for classes. They can't get classes and the Academic Advisors that they see give poor advisement. They're not helpful at all. I think that goes hand-in-hand with student rights. We have the right to Academic Advisement and the right to take the classes that we need and want, and the fact is some students aren't able to. What we try to do, as Student Government, is to help those students. The College Council presented this list of grievances to Advisement. We've been meeting with different administrators and directors to tell them "we want to work with you," and they said "we want to work with you too, how can we do this? How can we get better advisement? How can



we get more class availability and help students schedule their classes?” A lot of it has to go through petitions, which we help push through. One thing that was pushed through by a Senator on Student Government, Ali Shah, was the Arabic language class. That was all him. He started a petition, he’s the Academic & Co-Curricular Affairs Commissioner, and he basically did it himself. He did have to work with getting it approved by the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee and the Modern Language Department to accept it, but it happened. It worked, and it was by one of our own senators. There’s a process to everything, and we just have to try to help the students make that process better.

**TR: How would you fix the CSI and CUNY system as a whole?**

JS: That’s the ten billion dollar question.

**TR: Let’s say blank check. Everything you could do to fix CSI and CUNY, what would you do?**

JS: This, I think, would fix the CUNY system as a whole. A lot of people aren’t going to like it, but CSI isn’t the only school in the system that has open admissions. This academic year we had so many people on the wait list because we had so many applicants. If you apply to Hunter or Baruch, you can’t get in if you have a low GPA or SAT scores. You have to meet a standard, and CSI doesn’t even have that standard. We have other community colleges that are like that, and I understand that the community colleges are there to help students who may not have had that GPA, but we’re not supposed to be a community college. We’re supposed to be a senior college. We should have some kind of standards, just so that we can compete academically. That should go across the board for all CUNYs. We do have some excellent programs from different schools. City College has the Colin Powell Center for International Studies, which is amazing. They provide grants to students, and they send students abroad. They have scholarships, internship opportunities, and I think that’s wonderful. I think every CUNY school, just like CSI, just like City College, every school can have their great academic emphasis. I don’t think we get rated high enough at all, and the reason for that, I think, is that we’re not Ivy League or private.

**TR: People will pay a lot for college; not the degree but the name on the degree.**

JS: Definitely, they're pretty much paying for the brand name. Whereas here in CUNY, your education is what you make of it. I firmly believe in that. If you want to be an average student, you can. If you want to excel, you can, but it goes back to the student; they have to take the initiative to express that interest. They're only hurting themselves if they don't ask questions, if they don't participate in class discussions, if they don't talk to their professors outside of classes. So, in order to fix the CUNY system, to sum it up: It's the responsibility of the students, faculty and administration. They don't necessarily have to work together, but they all have to do their job. Students have to do their research, take the initiative to make their education what they really want it to be. The faculty really needs to take the initiative to engage their students. I've seen faculty who teach out of the textbook, and they could care less. That needs to change. The administration really needs to listen to their Student Governments. The Student Government feels the pulse of the student body, and can tell the Administration where they're lacking. This is what we need to put money towards, this is how you can improve the school. If all three groups were doing their jobs, we would have a much better CUNY and a better College of Staten Island.

**TR: Thank you very much. It was very enlightening.**

JS: You're welcome. I had a lot of fun.





# Palestine

By: Marty Clifford

Not conceived in love,  
sculpted by pressure.  
Not born into the world,  
burst volcanically to life.  
It is the Stone.  
shards of diamond and glass do not attack,  
If it strikes, a fist shall bleed all the same.  
It strikes to prevent the Stone from harming,  
then Fist blames Stone for the cuts it suffered.  
so the Fist must strike again  
against the Stone that will not break,  
more painful bleeding is the Fists reward.  
Body asks the Fist to relent,  
the pain is plain to see.  
The Anger compels the Fist onward  
It believes the Stone is a weapon  
Where Anger points, the Fist will strike  
and the Stone takes all the blame.

# The Internet: A Tool For the People

By: Chun Hom

Note: Please use the internet to do research on the people, events, and terms that are not clear to you.

To many the internet is a tool to get work done whether it is used for research or collaboration. Others use it as a source of information, information ranging from news to the opinions of others on the likes of Facebook and Twitter. Meanwhile, the rest use it for business, for the purchase or sale of services and goods. The internet has become the town square of the world. Information is traded between people every moment of every day, people become their own publishers, but more importantly people connect. For the internet's on-going and potential role in the development of the human race, it has been turned into a resource that governments fight over, usually against their people, to control.

The US military has the technology to force connections and communications into an area or country that has cut off communications (be it voice or data). The only problem is that doing so is an act of war. The military has aircraft that can be used to beam AM, FM signals for radio as well as UHF and VHF for television. There are also planes that fly around and restore internet access to blacked out areas. Then there are

attachments that can be mounted onto planes and drones that could bring both cellular and data services to the area or population. The approach requires specialized devices that can be smuggled into the area with relative ease. Then there are the satellites that can make a more permanent approach at re-establishing connection with the right satellite dishes. Keep in mind that what the US can give, it can also take away, as other countries have done.

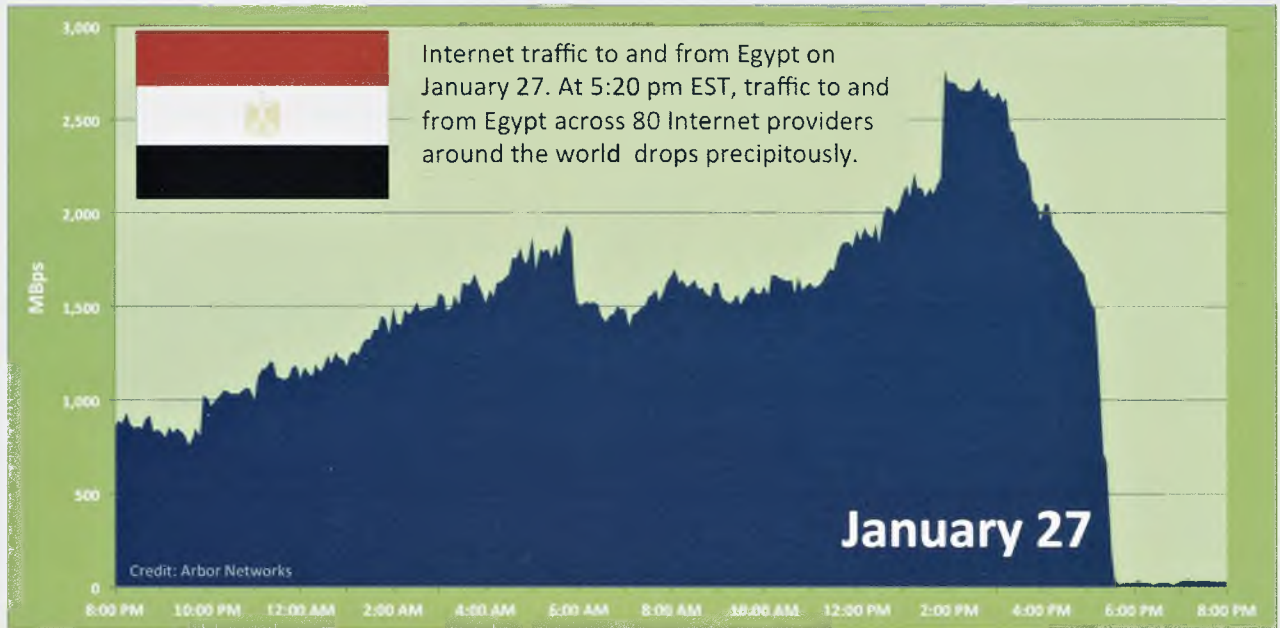
The recent protests in the Middle East have led to the ousting of two autocratic rulers

as of this writing. The people there protest the current state of their countries, their ineffectual and usually oppressive governments, and the crimes committed by the government. Several events have led to the protests in the region. Mass protests in Tunisia led to the ousting of President Zine El Abidine Ali, January 14, 2011. A man in Tunisia, discontent with the state of the country and living conditions immolated himself, January 17, 2011. Even prior to these events, there was Khaled Saeed, whose death was caused by police brutality. The Facebook page "We Are All Khaled Saeed" was used as a springboard of sorts for the discontent of the



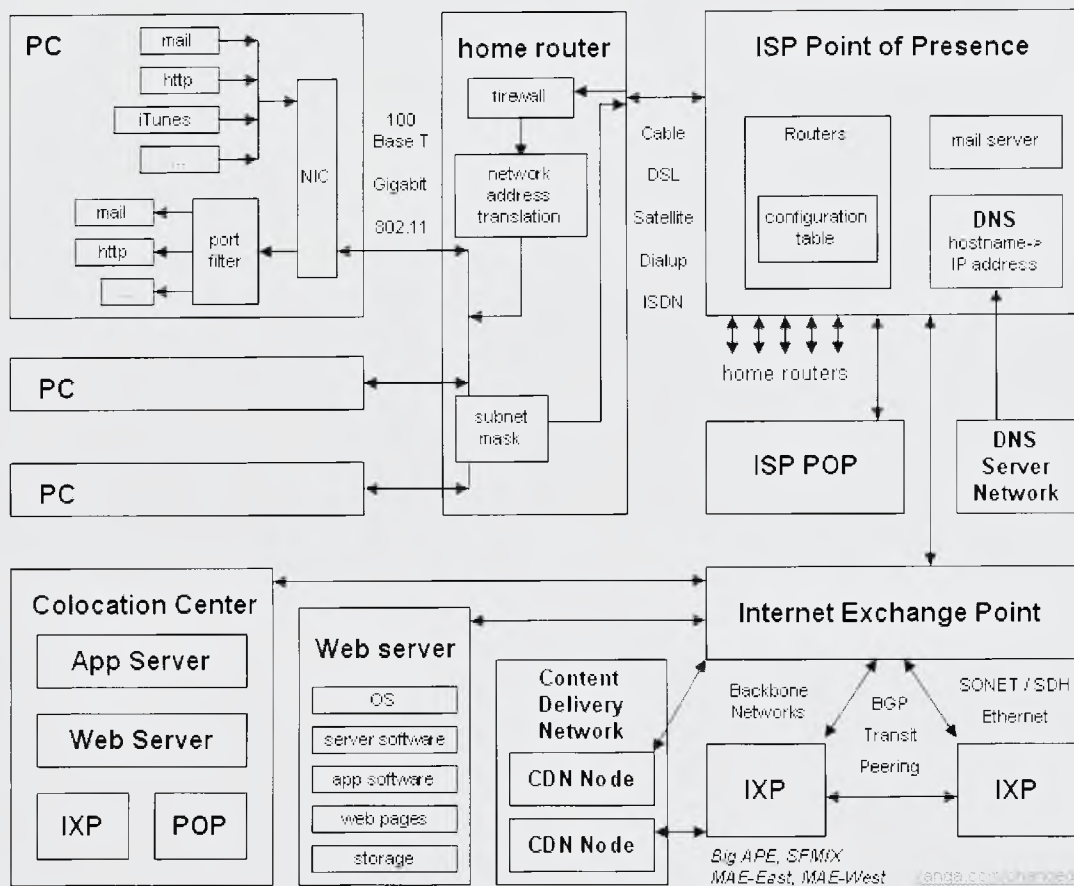


people towards the state of things in the Middle East. The protest in Cairo, Egypt's capital, began in earnest on January 25, 2011. Then on January 27, 2011 the internet in Egypt was abruptly cut.



The internet is made up of Internet Service Providers. These ISPs use routers to establish connections with others of the same ISP and to other ISPs. This interconnection of computers and computer-like devices is what makes the internet possible. When the Egyptian government turned off the internet, it did not have a metaphorical red button. It had to go through all of the ISPs and demand that they shut off the connections in the country. Egypt being an autocracy, the ISPs had no way to fight the demands and were forced to comply. More than 90% of the country's communications, cellular and data, were cut off in a single night.

The Egyptian government's reason for cutting the internet was to impede the people's ability to coordinate and execute further protests in its cities. This, however, backfired and caused the international community to step up support for the people of Egypt. If the internet had not been cut, most of "Generation Y" in the US would not have given a second glance at the unfolding situation in the Middle East. This was the first time where an entire country disappeared from the digital landscape. In a country that is believed to have over 150,000 political bloggers writing about the Egyptian government, the blackout forced many of them to turn to the streets, joining others in protest. Companies such as Google and Twitter found ways to keep the people of Egypt connected to the outside world, and allowed them to keep the world updated after the media blackout.



In regards to media blackouts, WikiLeaks, a whistle-blower type news site, was taken off-line in the United States. After many government officials and agencies stated that the most recent leaks (wiki cable-gate) were a threat to national security, the act could be considered treasonous. The removal of WikiLeaks is not limited to the US, other countries have followed suit and blocked off access to the site. In Germany, Theodor Reppe's home was raided. In Australia, the Australian Communications And Media Authority tried to blacklist the website for all Australians, but it never came to pass. In Thailand, the Centre for the Resolution of the Emergency Situation has censored WikiLeaks. In the People's Republic of China, any website with the word "WikiLeaks" in the URL is blocked.

The People's Republic of China is a near perfect example of government control over the internet. China gained access to the internet in 1994 and in 1997 the Chinese Ministry of Public Safety took steps to regulate the peoples use of the internet. In 1998, the Golden Shield Project was started and is often referred to as the "Great Firewall of China." The purpose of this firewall is to censor access to information that the government deems inappropriate for the population. What the government deems inappropriate,





however, ranges from pornography to social dissent. Using a variety of methods the government has effectively made China an island in the digital landscape where only certain traffic can go in and out.

The firewall in China is not that much different from those that can be purchased in retail stores. The concept is the same, and many of the techniques used are the same. The major difference is the Great Firewall of China is forced upon the population and used to keep the people uninformed. When the people have a need for something, they will find a way to meet those needs. If there is no alternative, people invent an alternative. With regard to the firewall, the people of China have found ways of getting around it. Using proxies, Onion routing, software and services from companies outside of China, the people can access the entirety of the internet. Sadly, the majority of the people are either not aware of these methods or are afraid to use them for fear of castigation by the government.

The Chinese government's response was the creation of the Green Dam software that had to be installed onto any new PC or laptop that was sold in the country. The official statement by the Chinese government was that the software blocks pornography. Upon further study of the software, it was found that it could be used for surveillance and electronic censorship. Due to several incidents, vulnerabilities and defects, the software is now no longer mandatory on new systems. The government stopped funding for the software in 2009; the developers of the software are shutting down for financial reasons.

In recent news, the US presidency wants the power to turn off the internet in the event of an unmanageable attack on US networks. This power would not just turn off the internet for government systems, but could also be used to turn off private networks. The Bill was first introduced in the summer of 2010, it has since been revised. The original bill stated that it would only affect the computers and networks of critical importance to the US's infrastructure. The revised bill gives the executive branch the power to designate any computer or network as vital, and that is not subject to judicial review. Checks and balances is a system that is integral to the functioning of our government. Without it the branches would abuse their power. Upon the executive branch's declaration of a national cyber emergency, the presidency would have full control over almost any and all computer networks.

The kill-switch would give the presidency the power to shut or isolate the computers or networks of anyone or any group. Without judicial review, the possibility for the abuse of power is significant. What is to

stop our government from silencing and disrupting protestors, as is the case in Egypt? What stops the government from monitoring the people, as is the case of China? Can our government be trusted to control the internet with limitless power? There are government agencies that do have near limitless power and these agencies are just as prone to accidents as their limited counterparts.

The Department Of Homeland Security (DHS), created after the September 11 attacks, is responsible for protecting the US from terrorist attacks as well as responding to natural disasters. The Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE) arm of the DHS was given the power to seize domain names in late 2010. In mid February, the ICE seized a domain name for child pornography. The problem with this is that the domain was also the host to over 80,000 sub-domains. Small businesses or private owners owned many of these sub-domains. Normally it would not have been a problem; ICE would just give the domains back to the rightful owners. The problem is that ICE posted warning banners all over the legitimate sites stating: "Advertisement, distribution, transportation, receipt, and possession of child pornography constitute federal crimes that carry penalties for first time offenders of up to 30 years in federal prison, a \$250,000 fine, forfeiture and restitution." Any visitors to the sites were shown the banners. Owners of the sites could do nothing about the banners for about a week. DHS and ICE have publicly ignored this incident and instead focused on the numbers



**This domain name has been seized by ICE - Homeland Security Investigations, pursuant to a seizure warrant issued by a United States District Court under the authority of Title 18 U.S.C. 2254.**

***Advertisement, distribution, transportation, receipt, and possession of child pornography constitute federal crimes that carry penalties for first time offenders of up to 30 years in federal prison, a \$250,000 fine, forfeiture and restitution.***



of legitimately dangerous sites that were taken down. For the owners of the wrongfully taken down sites, there does not seem to be any recourse to their damaged images.

In an era where some are seeking to make the use of the internet an inalienable right, the governments around the world try to restrict the people's freedoms. Advances in technology have reduced the need for office space as the workers can now work from home. It has changed the way people communicate with each other: video chat, texting, and instant messaging to name just a few. With all new advancement, its progress should be monitored and shaped responsibly. However, it has become harder and harder to tell what is good for the people when the people themselves do not know what they want, or what goes on around them. So use the internet, learn and connect with others, publish that book you've been writing, write of your day and experiences in that blog because someone, somewhere, someday will learn from you.

Addendum:

After the writing of this article, the Libyan government took action against protestors in a violent way. There have been reports that Muammar Gaddafi hired mercenaries to suppress the crowds and protests with live ammunition. Within days, there have been hundreds of people confirmed dead and the number is set to rise. There have also been reports that Gaddafi has ordered air and artillery strikes against the cities where protests are ongoing. On February 21, 2011, two Libyan pilots, with their jets carrying rockets and loaded machine guns, defected to Malta after being ordered to bomb and strafe protestors. On February 24, 2011, two pilots ejected from their aircraft into villages occupied by protestors rather than bomb civilians.

All of this happened after the country's connection to the internet became intermittent on February 18, 2011. The evidence currently shows that the intermittent connections are caused by internal shutdowns and not due to high traffic volume (Google: Renesys Libyan Disconnect). Regardless, Gaddafi probably hoped that word of his use of violence would not spread to the international community, or to the rest of the population. Yet the people have once again relied on the internet to get the news out to the international community. The people have used the internet to tell others of the violence used against them. The people have gained the support of others outside the country in an effort to remove Gaddafi from his position.

# Build it Now: A Review of The Socialist Alternative

By: Michael Miley



The Socialist Alternative: Real Human Development. By Michael A. Lebowitz  
191 pages  
Monthly Review Press 2010  
\$15.95

Michael A. Lebowitz, Professor Emeritus of Economics at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, Canada, begins his new book, *The Socialist Alternative: Real Human Development*, by paraphrasing Marx, “A specter is haunting the world – the specter of barbarism.” The barbarism Prof. Lebowitz speaks of is, of course, the yoke of capitalism and depths that it sinks people into in order to satisfy its insatiable greed. The point of this book is to put forth an argument for the necessity of Socialism in the twenty-first century, and the need to focus on human development. Actual human development, not the all consuming hunger of false needs and consumerism that capitalism thrives on and denies the work force.

Much of what is covered in this book is nothing really new to those already familiar with the ideas of Socialism. It reintroduces the idea that the Capital class divides the work force in order to maintain power and deceive them, recalling how the bourgeois used tensions between English and Irish labourers and how they used the threat of the unemployed to keep wages down. As Marx described it “the great beauty of capitalist production.” The Socialist Alternative is an introduction into Socialist thought geared towards today. That’s not to say the book does not offer anything valuable for those well versed in Marxist and Socialist theory and ideas. Indeed, it is a valuable resource for those activists looking for inspiration in leading for the Socialist alternative or those looking for a nice modern summary of some of those ideas. The book discusses what is to be done, and what needs to change if we are to bring about real human development and create ‘rich humans.’

Professor Lebowitz has a different meaning behind ‘rich humans’ than what the capitalist would consider rich. The capitalist considers someone who has amassed a great amount of material things, at the expense and exploitation of those around them, to be rich, Professor Lebowitz considers someone who has been able to develop themselves and to become a better person a ‘rich man.’ These two ideas are at odds, since capitalism depends on the poverty of a person in order to exploit the worker as much as possible, and allowing the worker to realize that he is being exploited would be counter productive to the goals of the capitalist.



But, as we have seen in history, the way forward will not be an easy one. We must keep our eyes on the past in order to avoid making those same mistakes. The book dismisses the State Capitalism of the former Soviet Union. If anything the key message of the book is that every mode of production is different, so a proper way of achieving the goals of real human development will differ from place to place. Lebowitz is also weary of top-down leadership and “infallible central committees.”

But what is this socialist society for the 21st century that Professor Lebowitz sees? In the Charter for Human Development described in the book, he lays out a few points:

- “Everyone has the right to share in the social heritage of human beings, has an equal right to the use and benefits of the products of the social brain and the social hand, in order to be able to develop his or her full potential”
- “Everyone has the right to be able to develop their full potential and capacities through democracy, participation and protagonism in the workplace and society – a process in which these subjects of activity have the precondition of the health and education which permits them to make full use of this opportunity.”

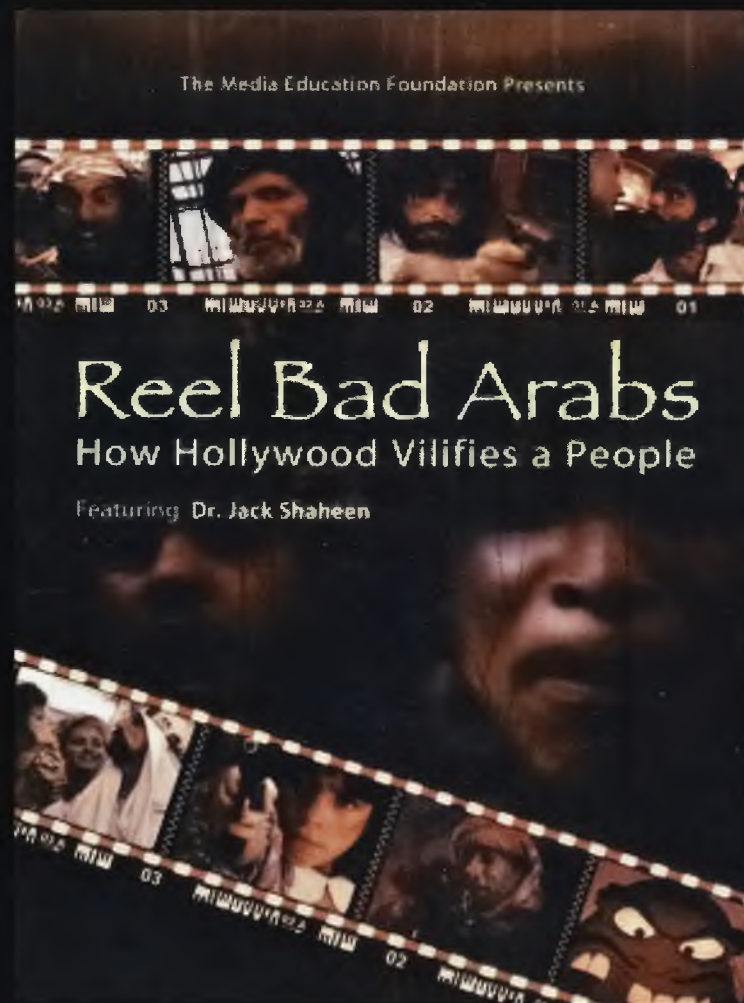
These are two of several points he makes for what a good socialist society, a society that is capable of allowing people to develop themselves to their full potential. I will fully admit this is a society I myself would desire. It is clear that capitalism is a dead end of history and of human development, that leads to one place, poverty and destruction, if the recent financial collapse and the on going recession not even to mention to continuing disaster in the Gulf of Mexico is not proof of this, I do not know what could convince someone otherwise.

There is a line from the late Howard Zinn’s play *Marx in SOHO*. In the play he, mentions how many people often say in response to criticisms of capitalism that “Marx is dead.” Implying of course, that his ideas are worthless. Marx then goes on to read bits from a newspaper recounting financial scandals and massive layoff and responds ‘Dead indeed.’ A small quip it may be, but important. I was reminded of this little quip while reading Professor Lebowitz’s book, since we hear the chorus of Marx is dead just about everywhere in our media, and *The Socialist Alternative* is an important book reminding us, that there is an alternative, there is a future beyond the meaningless consumerism, there is hope for mankind, and that hope is socialism, that there is a way forward and to echo the motto of the South African Communist Party “Socialism is the Future, Build it Now”!



# Reel Bad Arabs, a Film Review

By: Nadia Kader



*Reel Bad Arabs* is a groundbreaking documentary about the slanderous treatment of Arabs in cinema since the very beginning of film history up until today, which has gone virtually unchallenged and unnoticed by most mainstream audiences. Narrated by Jack G. Shaheen, the author of *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People*, this 50-minute documentary illustrates how since the beginning Hollywood has showcased racist portrayals of Arabs, (as well as Blacks, Asians, Jews and homosexuals) and portrayed Arabs as 'sub-human.' Shaheen also explains how these stereotypes did not simply disappear but slowly morphed into the more dangerous stereotype; that most Arabs are cold-blooded, ruthless, and inept terrorists who will stop at nothing to kill Americans.

Arabs in film reside in an imaginary place that Shaheen calls "Arabland," where the desert stretches for miles and every palace has a torture chamber in the basement. One of the trends of early Hollywood is the Arab villain who fights the white heroes with scimitars and underhanded fighting techniques. The princes have luxurious palaces with harems but are never satisfied; so they have to capture the blonde, blue-eyed white women. Shaheen brings up that "yesteryear's Arabland is today's Arab land" and shows a clip of Disney's *Aladdin* (1992). He goes on to explain that the film recycled every old Hollywood stereotype where the opening song starts off with "they cut off your ear if they don't like your face. It's barbaric but its home."



Not only was this film morbidly fascinating, it was really an eye opener for me especially. I am of Arab decent, have watched many of



these movies and never once thought of any of them as racist. These stereotypes have been so ingrained in our American culture that people do not bat an eye at such outlandish and dehumanizing portrayals of an entire people. What really unsettled me was the beginning of *Back to the Future* (1985) when the Libyans fire upon Doc Brown and Marty. The Libyans are a throwaway; they are never mentioned again once Marty gets into the time machine and are only a catalyst to get Marty to travel back in time. The terrorists could have been of any descent or not even terrorists at all; they have nothing to do with the overall plot of the film. I've watched *Back to the Future* maybe a dozen times and never thought twice about them until watching *Reel Bad Arabs*.

The documentary is told in easy to understand language and may shock audiences, but it is a necessary and important film. More people need to realize the dangerous consequences of racist stereotypes. Thankfully, many of the racist images have been somewhat erad-



icated: the minstrel show, cunning Asian villains, and dirty, covetous Jews. We no longer have to see any of these in today's films. Now, we have to not only raise awareness of dangerous Arabic stereotypes but to eliminate them.

# Pensées Profondes Du Noir

By: Amswood Carl Bastien

Discussing the notes, wearing lies like coats, the winter sinner, the blaspheme committer, must enter the temple, minds death is gentle.

Asking for purpose, the answer always hurts us, those who seek the truth always find the ones who defer us, their only answer is to cure us, of thought label it as a sin, the child of the enlightened killed his kin.

As a result the ignorant live in bliss, our people try to cure their pain with the slow kiss, putting our mouths to burning paper, the seeds in the words bring us to the state of higher vapors of knowledge

The liar is blessed, honest people's cards kept and tears wept; the game is too rich for their blood, the prize too unfamiliar to accept

His expression is disturbing the peace, his race, discreet; rebellious minds complete, knowledge is key yet it's filled with deceit, censored facts, the winner writes the past, cast a nation into darkness



# I Love Nerds

By: Ashley Hurwitz

*I love nerds. Comic-Con junkies are the tastemakers of tomorrow. Isn't that funny? The tables have turned.*  
- Kristen Bell, star of *Veronica Mars*

This year, Third Rail sent a few of its lucky members to Comic-Con. What is a political magazine doing at nerd-fest 2010? Reporting on the rapidly expanding cultural phenomena... nerds. Well, that actually isn't entirely true. We don't like to label people here at Third Rail, so excuse the unnatural amount of labeling that is about to happen in this article.

This past Comic-Con NYC was very different, and very crowded. This lucky reporter has been able to go to the past Cons, but this year they combined two huge groups together, Comic-Con and New York Anime Festival. While this may be cheaper and easier to house these two conventions together it created a massive over-crowding problem. It was odd at first: Superman rubbing elbows with Catgirls, squealing hordes of Naruto cosplayers posing for pictures with Orcs. It went from amusing to terrifying when I found myself wandering in the deep booths of NYAF, pinned to the wall of a "furry" vendor; I can still hear the yiffing.

If we forget about the addition of NYAF (let's all try to forget it exists together!) this Comic-Con was still one of the largest. A few years ago it did not have the turn-out or the media attention that this convention received. This Comic-Con was all about the big names, be it within the video game industry or Hollywood. What happened to the quiet nerd subculture that used to occupy this convention?

Money. Movies. Television. Basically, the mass sell-out of all the franchises that were protected by a tight-knit community. Why are nerds being courted by society these days? Did everyone forget the days of wedgies and exclusion? Everyone can agree that franchises like Batman and the other big names within the world of comics and video games were always fairly well-known by the rest of society. Nowadays, everything is turned into a comic or a movie. Hit TV shows are created to show a positive "nerd" character, a dashing man or woman who embodies all that is nerdism. These are all contributing factors to the new appreciation for nerd culture. But why now?

I got to sit down with a real life nerd, and I got to learn a few things about this growing nerd subculture. My interviewee, who has asked to remain anonymous, was very helpful in clearing up a few misconceptions: the differences between nerds and gamers, what a "nerd" is considered these days and how the genre has changed.



Photo courtesy of Ramses Martinez

**Third Rail: How would you classify yourself in nerd culture?**

Anonymous Nerd: Before the genre got destroyed, I would consider myself a gamer. Professionally, I would consider myself a computer nerd.

**TR: How do you feel about the influx in popularity involving the nerd culture?**

AN: There's two ways to feel. One, we are being recognized as a culture and accepted... Not frowned upon, which is fantastic. However, the other side of that is the fact that our general unacceptance is what gave us our characteristics... We were outcasts. We had a strong, small community and we stayed in it. A small aside, most nerds do not label themselves as nerds. Labeling in general is pretty dated.

**TR: What parts of nerdism do you currently subscribe?**

AN: Star Wars, roleplaying, board gaming, video games, computer interests, science, math, comics.

**TR: What do you think is drawing in the rest of society to embrace things like sci-fi and super-heroes etc, on this mass scale?**

AN: Like what drives most people, money and power. The nerds of yesterday are growing up and they have larger demands from these genres. If you're smart enough, you would profit off these things. You'd become an inventor or a programmer etc. Go to a Star Trek convention... Look at how many of these people are influenced to become inventors because of shows like Star Trek. Short story, nerds are where the money is right now.

**TR: What about these mass produced comic book movies? They are all generally terrible, and produced on a yearly basis. Isn't this just making the genre more popular to the lowest common denominator?**

AN: As I said, nerds equals money and they're just running it dry.



**TR: What is the difference between gamers and nerds, in your opinion?**

**AN:** A gamer is someone who plays video games. You don't have to be intelligent to be a gamer. A nerd is someone who takes interest in the nerd culture... Such as science, math, and other intellectual interests.

**TR: In this day and age of everything becoming a movie, what would you actually like to see up on the big screen?**

**AN:** A science movie that actually has real science in it. I'm tired of pseudo science. I understand that sci-fi movies aren't necessarily a hundred percent accurate. But don't present this as a real life scenario.

**TR: Does all of this commercialization make you angry? When you go into stores and see star wars shirts, or kids wearing beloved nerd icons without a clue to who they are, how does that make you feel?**

**AN:** It's not for me to judge. You can be an avid fan, or a passing one. It's when you start to act like you are superior to others that it becomes a problem. Nerds, generally, are inclusive.

**TR: What was your opinion of Comic Con, you last went in 2006, what was your impression?**

**AN:** The NY one, it had a small crowd. Many indie vendors. They had a few keynote people from Marvel and DC. But for the most part, they had comic celebrities.

**TR: How do you feel about Comic-Con these days?**

**AN:** Comic-Con is starting to be more commercialized, which is expected. I also don't believe in nerds being in the same place at once... some of them smell. It is actually becoming more about pop culture than about actual comics and gaming.

**TR: Does anime fall under the category of nerd? NYAF was recently housed with Comic-Con for the first time ever. Many were not pleased with the combining of cons.**

AN: (He doesn't respond, simply rubbing his fingers together to indicate "money".) That's all I can really tell you. It's popular, and it's cheaper to house the two at the same venue than do two separate conventions.

**TR: Do you think that the popularity nerd culture has recently received will be a long one, or is it a passing fad to the main public?**

AN: Hopefully, it will be a merger of acceptance. It will just blend and we won't have a need for things like nerd, jocks, and labels whatever. People can just be people.

**TR: So is the old saying true? All nerds are just smelly fat guys in batman costumes? That they've never even felt the soft touch of a woman?**

AN: It makes up maybe about 2 percent. Most nerds don't like interacting with other people. There are outcasts within any culture or society, we just happen to have outcasts that have sadly become the poster boys for what "nerds" appear to be.

**TR: Do you think people will ever move past that pathetic image of the nerd?**

AN: Probably not this generation, but maybe the next. If you've noticed in the media the nerd jokes have lessened, to an extent. And actually, you'll find more examples of the jock being humiliated. Glee is a great example of this.



Photo courtesy of Ramses Martinez



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**THIS COULD  
BE YOU!**



Edward Pappas 10/10/19