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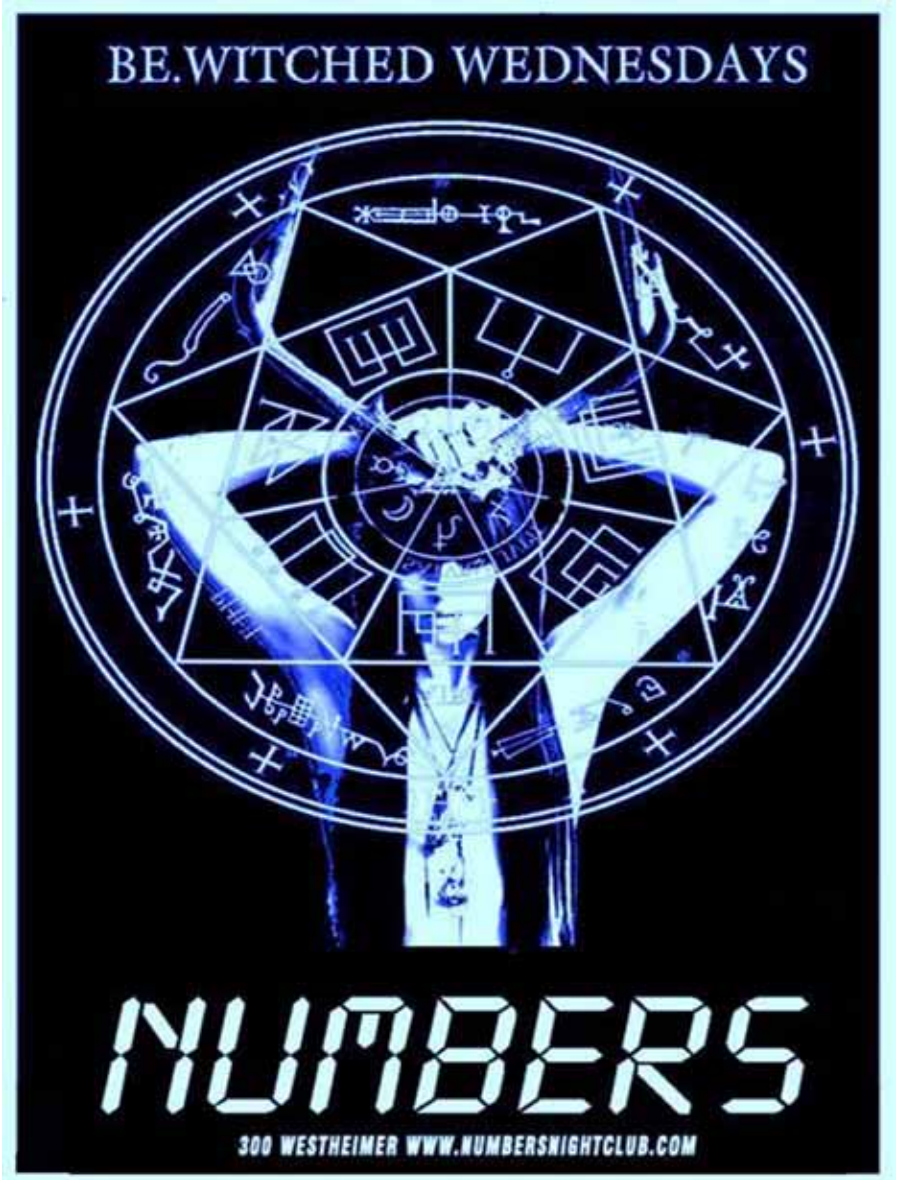
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# RUDYARD'S

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DECEMBER



**MON. 1ST**

CANNABIS CORPSE, MAMMOTH GRINDER,  
INANIMATE EXISTENCE, PEASANT, ASS

**THURS. 4TH**

VANILLA WHALE, VAGRANT SONS

**FRI. 5TH**

VELOSTACKS, LIVING DOLLS, VATOS LOCOS

**SAT. 6TH**

ALTERCATION PUNK COMEDY CHRISTMAS SHOW

**MON. 8TH**

OPEN MIC COMEDY NIGHT

**THURS. 11TH**

OPHELIA'S ROPE

**FRI. 12TH**

STEPHEN NEEPER AND THE WILD HEARTS, FATHER SKY,  
DR. GREEN DREAMS

**SAT. 13TH**

THE GRIZZLY BAND, BRAND NEW HEARTS, ONLY BEAST,  
KNIGHTS OF THE FIRE KINGDOM

**MON. 15TH**

OPEN MIC COMEDY NIGHT

**TUES. 16TH**

BOOTOWN PRESENTS GROWN UP STORY TIME

**THURS. 18TH**

FIDDLE WITCH AND THE DEMONS OF DOOMS,  
KELLY DOYLE TRIO

**FRI. 19TH**

FUSSING AND FIGHTING

**SAT. 20TH**

DYKES ON BYKES, THE MUDBUGGS, LAYBACK GRINDS

**MON. 22ND**

OPEN MIC COMEDY NIGHT

**FRI. 26TH**

PROJECT GRIMM, SLOW FUTURE

**SAT. 27TH**

ANDY HUGGINS COMEDY SHOW

**MON. 29TH**

OPEN MIC COMEDY

**TUES. 30TH**

WINTER WONDER GLAM W/ DEAD ROSES

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# ¿DO GEESE SEE GOD?

**IT'S CLEAR THAT JULES BUCK JONES** was an ungulate in a very recent lifetime. As his middle name would suggest, the Austin-based artist communes with nature on a level deeper than most. His mother, a painter named Sheep Jones, must have given him that name for a very good reason.

"My girlfriend and I were out at Guadalupe Mountains National Park, and we're hiking through this canyon and we hear this large crack, like something is striking antlers against a rock. We look up and we see these two bighorn sheep, baying, smacking their heads together and locking horns, wrestling. We just sat there and watched that...I love going out to Big Bend, but that really sold Guadalupe Mountains for me."

Jones' recently opened exhibition entitled *¿Do Geese See God?* at Houston's McMurtrey Gallery showcases some of the artist's new work. Jones uses pen and ink, watercolors and collage to build worlds that are sometimes dark and foreboding, sometimes rich and vivid, but always alive and breathing, powerful and dynamic. He's reminding you that nature is bigger than you, and that it's never something to be messed with.

"I'm anthropomorphizing nature," Jones said. "The longer you stare at the work, the more it starts to come out at you – eyes, teeth, genitalia and stuff." Jones builds many of his pieces by mirroring the skeletal structure of the forest. "It has this skeleton. There's all this flesh to it too, but if you start to really look at it you can start to see this structure behind it...sort of like walking through the forest in Bastrop after those fires."

Jones' subjects include deconstructed woodland imagery, different animals, water, light, and night, according to the show's abstract. Jones aims to unveil something alive and breathing hidden behind the underbrush. According to Jones, these landscapes "breathe, burp, piss, shit, fuck, grow, and die. They stare at you, an endangered concept, a sentient environment."

## **JULES BUCK JONES, EMU LOVE VOLUME, 2014 INK, WATERCOLOR, & PENCIL ON PAPER. 50" X 38"**

There is a sense of symmetry in Jones' images, and the title of the exhibition and some of the included works are palindromes that play on that symmetry. "I started going through all these books on palindromes. They're really interesting because you're bound by this certain formula, these rules...Sometimes you get these really crazy phrases that come out of that." According to Jones, *¿Do Geese See God?* was the perfect title for the exhibition.

"I have these four pieces in the show that accomplished exactly what I wanted them to do," Jones said. No Lemon No Melon is one of them. Entangled branches and tree limbs in vivid yellows, oranges and browns reach out at the viewer, drawing them into the scene. "It's very Venusian," he said.

In addition to painting and pen and ink drawings, the exhibition also incorporates sculpture. There is one large sculpture piece, comprised of a wood frame, foam and papier-mâché. "I'm hoping to do more with sculpture...I could literally go forever with it until I hit a physical wall or a ceiling or something," Jones said. "It's not so confined by the frame, by the square...It's something to bring the show off the walls."

Jones hopes that instigating a dialogue about the collective consciousness of nature will demand more accountability for our actions. He believes our collective conversation with the world is too one sided. His work suggests a power shift between the viewer and subject, that is, between humans and nature. He depicts nature as a force unwilling to be developed, manicured, or profited on. Jones' "imagery is defiant, armed with tooth and nail, eyes and thoughts."

According to Jules Buck Jones, "We are not the only ones who live here, we are not the only things with needs, and we are not the only ones with power." **FPH**

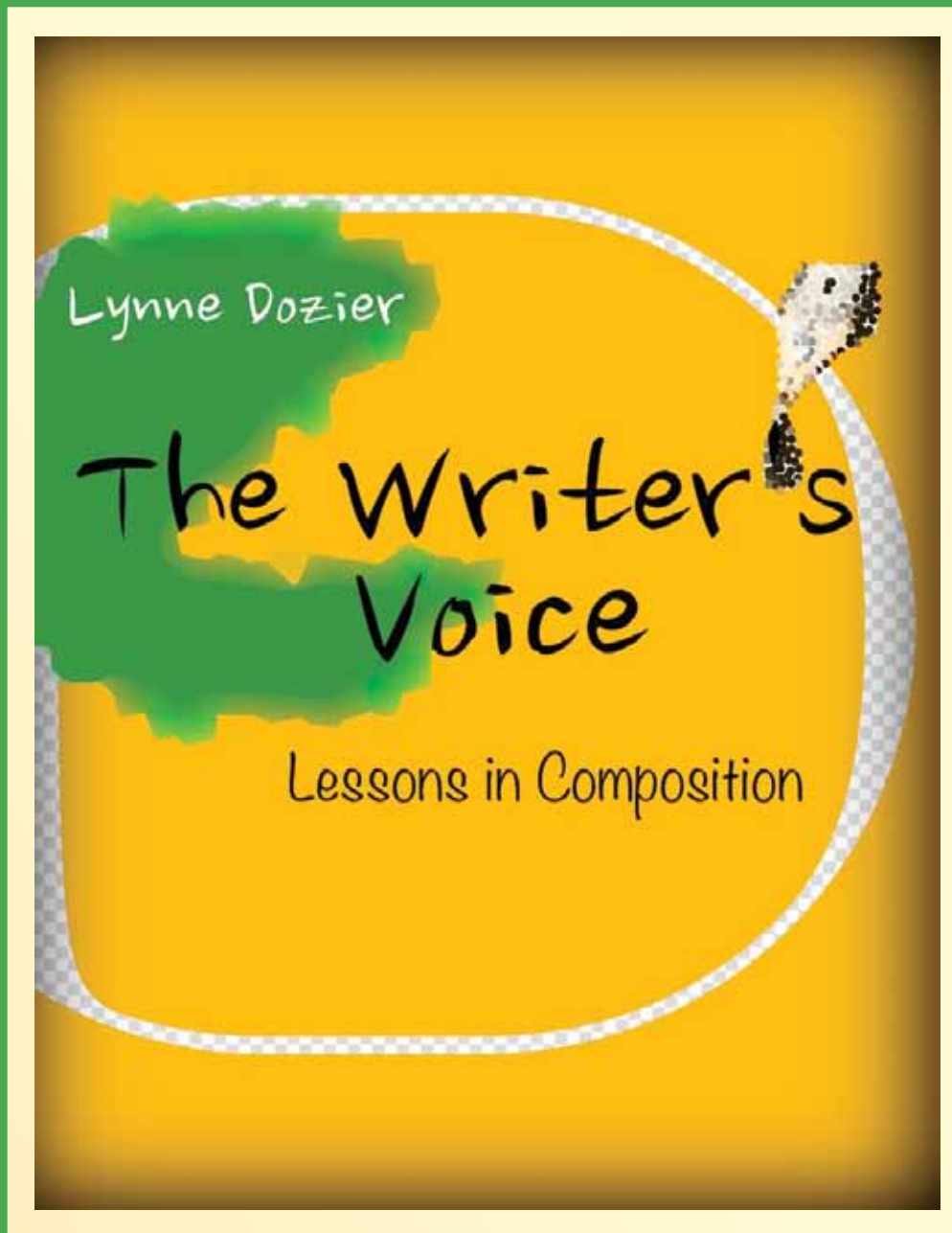
*¿Do Geese See God?* is open through Jan. 10 at the McMurtrey Gallery Houston, 3508 Lake Street. Gallery hours are Tuesday-Friday 10:30-5:00 and Saturday, 11:00-5:00.



Jules Buck Jones, "Emu Love Volume," 2014. Ink, watercolor, and pencil on paper, 50" x 38".

JULES BUCK JONES AT MCMURTREY GALLERY  
BY SCOTT SQUIRES

# *The Writer's Voice*



LYNNE DOZIER, AWARD WINNING WRITING TEACHER, HAS CREATED A COMPLETE GUIDE TO BUSINESS, LITERARY AND ACADEMIC WRITING, STANDARDIZED TESTING, GRAMMAR, PUNCTUATION AND VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT — A BOOK FOR “STRUGGLING WRITERS” WHO UNDERSTAND THAT EVEN THOUGH THEY MIGHT NOT EARN A LIVING AS WRITERS, THEY WILL ALL HAVE TO WRITE TO EARN A LIVING.

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**ACCORDING TO THE ACADEMY** of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences there are 323 films this year eligible for awards consideration. Throw in another hundred or so independent off-the-grid film and easily there are 400 films that a person could have experienced in 2014.

So should a top ten list include about 40 films? That's ten percent of the total number of films. No. A top ten is a top ten and that means no baker's dozen for this engaging inventory.

*"Inherent Vice"* was twice as nice the second time around. You almost had to immediately want to see this film again after the first time because of its labyrinthine plot. This convoluted mystery based on a Thomas Pynchon novel spins around the cases of constantly stoned private detective Larry Doc Sportello. Everybody has nicknames. Doc's nemesis, an L.A.P.D. detective (and part time actor), has an oral fixation and likes to be called Bigfoot.

Paul Thomas Anderson directs a large cast that includes Joaquin Phoenix, James Brolin, Eric Roberts, Benicio Del Toro, Owen Wilson, Martin Short, Jena Malone, Reese Witherspoon and Katherine Waterston among others. *Inherent Vice* opens in Houston in January.

*"Whiplash"* is the little film that could. Miles Teller plays a jazz drummer in a music conservatory torn between his desire to be the best drummer ever and his fear of his abusive instructor, expertly realized by J. K. Simmons.

*"Nightcrawler"* stars Jake Gyllenhaal as a free-lance videographer who drives around nocturnal Los Angeles crime scenes. Not unlike Weegee from the '30s/'40s Gyllenhaal isn't above rearranging accident victims so that his videos have integral symmetry. Writer/director Dan Gilroy also casts his wife Rene Russo as a television news director who is almost as ruthless as Gyllenhaal.

For *"Birdman"* director Alejandro González Iñárritu uses digital technology to create invisible edits. Other than some opening and closing shots, the entire film seems to be one continuous take. An actor (Michael Keaton) hopes to redeem his credibility by starring and directing a Broadway play.

Emma Stone, Naomi Watts, Edward Norton, Zach Galifianakis, and Andrea Riseborough co-star. Cinematography by Emmanuel Lubezki deserves special recognition.

I don't live in a world where Woody Allen films aren't major cinematic events. *"Magic in the Moonlight"* pits Emma Stone and Colin Firth as rivals in the art of illusion. Allen probes the struggles of Firth and his sense of agnostic belief in the face of unexplained, and possibly religiously inspired, events. At all times, *"Magic in the Moonlight"* is a breezy comedy and while questions of doctrine occupy some of the running time and romance is never far behind.

*"Blood Ties"* played for a solid week at one obscure theater but I have never gotten this film out of my mind since. An English language film from French helmer Guillaume Canet (*"Tell No One"*) *"Blood Ties"* examines the relation between two brothers: one a cop, the other a criminal.

Vintage 1970s settings evoke the atmosphere of Sidney Lumet films. The cast includes Clive Owen, Billy Crudup, Marion Cotillard, Mila Kunis, Zoe Saldana, Matthias Schoenaerts and James Caan.

*"Tusk"* is a movie about storytelling. We hear many tales throughout the movie, even as genres mix and mash. At times the action is a comic send-up of internet bloggers and at other times the atmosphere is downright terrifying. Writer/director Kevin Smith hits the ball out of the park with *"Tusk."* Imagine the surrealist play *"Rhinceros"* (Eugène Ionesco) reimagined as a horror film and mix in a lot of pontificating speeches from people keeping other people hostage.

The story is anchored by an incredible perfor-

mance from Michael Parks, as well as an uncredited performance from a heavily disguised Johnny Depp. Justin Long headlines and the "kid who see dead people," Haley Joel Osment, is now fully grown.

*"The Imitation Game"* finds another foreign director (Morten Tyldum, *"Headhunters"*) breaking new ground with a prestigious English language film. Benedict Cumberbatch headlines as mathematician Alan Turing. Turing led the top secret British team that broke the German enigma code during WWII. Keira Knightley and Mark Strong lend some good supporting performances. In this covert world there are plenty of secrets including being gay or a Soviet spy.

*"Top Five"* hilariously lampoons the current media culture. Chris Rock writes/directs/stars. Rock and Rosario Dawson walk around NYC, she a NY Times reporter and he obsessed with the opening of his new movie.

Rock's character has become an Eddie Murphy level star in a series of ham-fisted action films. Only his new film is a serious drama about a slave rebellion in Haiti. He tells reporters at a press junket that the rebellion killed 50,000 white people "but we only kill about two or three thousand on screen." *"Take Five"* gently pushes your face up close to the doo.

*"Guardians of the Galaxy"* introduces Rocket Raccoon, a truly grumpy yet charismatic character who carries a big stick and has a natural mask. Rocket is part of an ensemble that includes Groot a plant based life form, Drax a kind of muscle man, Gamora (Zoe Saldana) a green skinned femme fatale with martial arts skills, and Peter Quill (Chris Pratt) an Earthling who was kidnapped by aliens from his home planet in the 1980s and who fancies himself a mercenary named Starlord.

Direction is by James Gunn whose previous feature length films were distinguished by their no-holds-barred indie chutzpah, particularly the brilliant super hero black comedy merely titled "Super." Gunn steps up to the Hollywood standard of adhering to a PG-13 sensibility while stuffing the content with innuendo and subtle references to nostalgia. **FPH**

BY MICHAEL BERGERON

*A more complete list of best films, as well as foreign film and documentary offerings can be found on the Free Press Houston website in the film category.*





# FUCK YEAH, LET'S GO

**THERE, IS A STYLE OF PLAY IN BASKET-BALL** called the run and gun. It is an aggressive offensive style; you push the ball up the court and force the offense; no walking up the court, no waiting for the shot to show up, the idea is to score, fast and steady. This is similar to the style of rock that the Ex Hex plays. It is go from the jump, no building to a crescendo. Out of the gate, rock!

"Fuck yeah, let's go," would be the philosophy according to drummer extraordinaire Laura Harris. "Let's do it. I don't know, let's just go, Yeah man, people wanna come see that stuff, then yeah, let's go, let's write more songs, let's play more, let's go!" (Exclamation mine, the interview happened during a drive from Atlantic City, and the rest of the band was sleeping, but I kind of inferred that the sentiment was more animated than she was allowed to be at the time).

Ex Hex are a rock n' roll band in the most no frills interpretation of those words. I would say basic rock n' roll in the spiritual sense: simple, but not simple—tight might be the better sentiment. Every note is necessary. Every drum beat falls at the exact right place. There is no fat, all muscle. It was a style favored by the greatest FM rock of the 70s, the punk of the 80s, the pop of the 50s, the soul of the 60s; it's the song, the delivery. Their album is called "Rips" for fucks sake, and that is what it does for 35 solid minutes. It fucking rips.

"Actually we did a bunch of editing for a lot of them. Mary would suggest to me I take something out, or not play something, and it was the same thing with us, all of us would do that to each other. I think that those songs got so simple because we all were cutting and cutting and cutting stuff out...We all really love 70s, late 70s, rock, pop, I mean we love all music, but we were listening to a lot of 70s and 80s pop, power pop, punk, like 80s...you know we just wanted to make just fun solid rock songs."

Directness. The most primal connection we have to sound, is what it directs us to do. Music, in its most primal stage, influences movement: toe tapping, head nodding, clapping, shaking etc. Ex Hex's albums connects to this principle. You can imagine it live; it sounds as it would sound live; no multitude of layered vocals, or choir, no guest rapping, it is a reflection of what the show might be like. This is music that has to be experienced live, it would almost be criminal to accept it only as an aural document.

"Yeah man, for sure. We all played in bands where we liked the music but it sucked to play it live. It's not fun. We just want to have a good time like our first bands that we ever played in were like that. It a different thing when you can play in a band and just cut loose. When were writing that stuff, it was just like, I don't know if we were thinking about it

(how the songs would come across live or not) it was just let's play music first as band, and we had such a blast."

However, within the humdrum of touring, driving cross country, sitting and waiting for sound checks or hotel rooms to be cleaned, eating in a different place everyday, seeing the majority of a city or country from bus windows, fighting major or minor sickness while still having to muster up the strength to be everyone's moment every night can probably become trying, especially when the album you released set such a high standard.

"Honestly, that time when we're playing is the best we've felt all day. It's like when you've been in the car all day long, you try to take your vitamins and drink water, you know, but once you get on stage it doesn't matter, even if you've been sick, or your energy's low, it doesn't matter. It can be hard to get through sometimes, some shows it's definitely more natural, but hands down it's the best time of the whole day."

So I say, let's share that experience January 13th, when Ex Hex hits Walter's Downtown (1120 Naylor) This will be a genuinely wonderful rock experience. Don't take just take my word on it, take all 800 words I've dedicated to this article for it. You are welcome. **FPH**

BY KM ANDERSON



JAN 24-25 2015



COME & TAKE IT

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2015 | HTX

WHITEST KIDS U' KNOW,  
MARIA BAMFORD, TODD BARRY,  
(THE TODD BARRY PODCAST & STAND UP)  
KEVIN MCDONALD, MIKE LAWRENCE,  
JAKE AND AMIR (IF I WERE YOU PODCAST)  
BROOKS WHELAN, DUNCAN TRUSSELL, HENRY PHILLIPS  
(STAND UP & PUNCHING THE CLOWN SCREENING Q&A),  
DOWN IN FRONT MOVIE ROAST, CHRIS CUBAS, ANDY HUGGINS,  
BOB BIGGERSTAFF, CODY HUSTAK, GABE BRAVO, THE WHISKEY  
BROTHERS PODCAST, SLADE HAM, JOHN WESSLING, ROB MUNGLE,  
SAM DEMARIS, DEM DAMN DAMES, ASHTON WOMACK, JAFFER KHAN,  
MATT HAN, JUSTIN THOMPSON, SCOTTY PETERSON, OWEN DUNN,  
JOHN NGUYEN, DALE CHEESMAN, ZACH DICKSON, VICTOR TRAN, PUNK ROCK CIRCUS, DUSTI RHODES, BRIAN  
ZEOLLA, KRISTIN LINDNER, THEO TAYLOR, LAH TELEVIDO PODCAST, RICH WILLIAMS, WARREN WRIGHT, BOB  
MORRISSEY, DANNY PALUMBO, NICK MERIWETHER, NIA DEBOSE, JOSH BROKAW, JOE BATES, MAXWELL  
ROBOWITZ, REED BECKER, KU EUGENTI, BRYSON BROWN, STEPHEN BRANDAU, ZAHID DEWJI, AL BAHMANI

# SILENCE = CONSENT

**“FOUR AND A HALF MINUTES OF SILENCE!”** Pastor E.A. Decker called out to a crowd of about 700 people in Third Ward near Freeway 288. “Four minutes of silence to represent the four and a half hours Mike Brown lay in the street in Ferguson!”

Most everyone complied, but some fidgeted and made noises, which was met with with Decker’s admonition: “Silence!.....SILENCE!.....Your silence is your STRENGTH!”

This was a powerful moment at one of Houston’s largest protests, to date, against police brutality. In the subsequent month and a half, Houston has continued to call on its strength but been anything but silent as it joins other cities across the country in ramping up the resistance against police aggression. The #BlackLivesMatter movement was sparked, initially, by the murder of 18 year-old Mike Brown at the hands of Ferguson police officer Darren Wilson. However, since the story first emerged, numerous other cases, equally troubling, have come to light. These include the choking death of Eric Garner in Staten Island, N.Y., the toy-gun incident with 12 year-old Tamir Rice in Cleveland, Ohio, and the Walmart pellet gun case involving John Crawford in Beavertown, Ohio.

Locally, Houstonians have been anticipating a grand jury announcement regarding 26 year-old Jordan Baker. Baker was gunned down by a police officer last January after a brief encounter and foot chase when the officer mistook him for one (any one) of three robbery suspects who held up three stores nearby. Similar to the Brown case, the officer claimed that Baker “charged at him.” Baker’s mother, however, does not believe this, and many Houstonians are likewise skeptical.

**NOVEMBER 25**

Though activists have centered the cases of Brown and Garner, their protests are on behalf of all unarmed black men extra-judicially murdered by police. On November 25th, the day following the grand jury announcement that Wilson would not be indicted, roughly 600 people convened at MacGregor Park near University of Houston. The energy was high from the get-go, with a sense of readiness to go out into the streets to disrupt business as usual. Early on, Assata Richards, program director for Project Row Houses, suggested that the group block the intersection of MLK and Old Spanish Trail. The spot was held for about fifteen minutes before organizers led the group in an unpermitted march through Third Ward, along the perimeters of UH and TSU, picking up about 400 more participants along the way.

At 288, there was a call—made organically by the crowd—for that freeway to be blocked. This culminated in a standoff with police, who formed a human chain to obstruct access. Pushing and shoving between protesters and police stopped only when Pastor E.A. Decker and another member of the NAACP called for “four and a half minutes of silence”

from the crowd. Some believe that this instruction was misguided because it gave police officers time to diffuse the crowd’s militant energy. While participants and organizers debated what to do next, about 100 people left. The march eventually proceeded back to TSU, where many students still on campus joined the protesters in an impassioned speak-out.

**DECEMBER 6**

Protests and die-ins have continued to take place throughout December—at MacGregor Park, on the campus of UH, as well as at Rice University. Some of the larger actions have been in the Galleria area. On December 6th, about 600 people turned up with renewed energy in the wake of the announcement that the officer responsible for the death of Eric Garner would also elude indictment. Protesters held up signs that read “I Can’t Breathe,” and some wore mouth-covers to reinforce this.

For about an hour, they chanted, “Hands Up! Don’t Shoot!” “No Justice, No Peace!” and “Black Lives Matter!” Some stood in one spot while others repeatedly traversed the crosswalks at Westheimer and Post Oak. The constant movement allowed them to be visible and audible to cars driving by, and to cause traffic slow-downs. All the while, the tension was palpable as protesters glared at police officers and challenged or mocked their directives for order.

Soon, led by the National Black United Front, the crowd entered the Galleria, and because doing so was spontaneous and unprecedented, the police could do little to stop it. Inside, protesters were spirited, moving about and shouting, “If I Can’t Breathe, You Can’t Breathe!” and “We won’t take it any longer! Justice for Eric Garner!”

As they rode up and down the escalators, they chanted and defiantly carried signs that read, “Ferguson is Everywhere,” “White Silence = White Consent,” and “Don’t Blame the Victim; Examine the System.”

Perhaps most poignantly, they lay down on the floor near Nordstrom’s, Macy’s, and the Apple store, to symbolize fallen, unarmed black men. While some Galleria shoppers joined or cheered in support, others looked on with fear or disdain. Ultimately, ten to twelve stores locked down for fear of looting and vandalism, which protesters insisted was never on their minds; their aim was only to be heard.

While this occupation was still in progress, social media was flooded with news reports about it. This, too, was met with mixed reactions, some people approved wholeheartedly and others found the shutdown of retail stores to be a counterproductive misplacement of blame. For long-time activist Burke Moore, however, the invasion of the Galleria was quite simply an exquisite triumph. He and others felt that taking a first step toward challenging corporate interests could only bode well for even bolder actions to come.



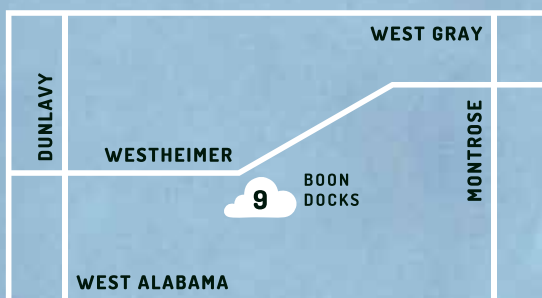
LOCAL PROTESTS AGAINST POLICE VIOLENCE  
 BY JANE NGUYEN  
 PHOTO BY ELIZABETH BROSSA

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In the days after, people eagerly anticipated a repeat performance, with even more numbers, on the following weekend. This hope was quickly dashed, though, when organizer Michael Allen received a phone call from Galleria property management and HPD four days beforehand.

“They threatened me,” he said, “that if anybody went into the Galleria to protest, I would be liable. They also said that we can protest on the sidewalks and the park, but if we block any intersections or roadways, we would be arrested.”

#### DECEMBER 13

Just as promised, on December 13th, officers stood firm with arms across their chests in front of Neiman Marcus, daring protesters to enter. Parts of the Galleria lawn were fenced in with steel barricades, and posted along the sidewalks and on entrance windows were signs that read, “No protesting on these premises. Protesters will be treated as trespassers. Violators will be prosecuted.”

At one point, when a small group of protesters wanted to cross an intersection at Westheimer and Post Oak, officers told them that they could not. If they tried to, they would be arrested, police said, because there were too many people on the other side. Officers claimed that this was for public safety, but many believe it was simply to disrupt the protest, as people identified as shoppers were allowed to cross streets freely.

Officers also told protesters that they could not enter the mall even if they were finished protesting for the day and wished to enter as individuals, carrying no signs, to grab a bite to eat. If they did so, police warned, they would be arrested for trespassing.

Tensions ran high in other ways as well. Many participants noticed undercover cops wearing bulletproof vests, standing among them, not chanting but quietly holding their hands behind their backs. They taunted mounted officers with cutting words: “Get those animals off those horses!” and “Fuck the police!” There was even back-and-forth yelling about apathy and consumerism between three protesters and a long line of shoppers camped out for the release of Jordan athletic shoes.

With increasingly crowded sidewalks and driveways as more people showed up, officers became more irritable and threatening, and arrests began to occur. All told, six men and two women were taken into custody, some of them charged with obstructing a highway.

Other arrestees were just passive bystanders, though. A witness said that while officers were manhandling some protesters, one woman got caught in the pushing and shoving but continued to film the police being rough with people. She was eventually knocked to the ground in the midst of the skirmish. Soon after, she was handcuffed with a plastic zip-tie and taken away.

In the next week, the nation saw the massive protests in New York City, as well as the cleverly orchestrated shut down of the Oakland Police Department with a much smaller but highly effective group of people. Houston organizers realized that they, too, had to find a way to work with what they had, regardless of how many people showed up for the upcoming action.

#### DECEMBER 20

Saturday, December 20th was an overcast day, and this time, the numbers had dwindled dramatically from the previous actions, from 500 to about 100. This

time, however, some were on hand well before the start time in order to scope out the situation. The typical contingent of men in blue—both on foot and on horses—milled around.

Protesters gave speeches at the park before starting a march toward the intersection of Westheimer and Post Oak. As if to compensate for their fewer numbers, the chanting was more loud and spirited than in the previous two actions. They roared, “We’re fired up, can’t take it no more!” and “What do we want? JUSTICE! When do we want it? NOW!”

During this action, yet more barricades erected and two officers warned through bullhorns, non-stop, that if protesters stepped into the street, entered the mall, or obstructed an intersection, they would be arrested. At intersections, participants were allowed to cross only when officers removed barricades.

Since protesters were not allowed to enter the Galleria, as there were once again prohibitive signs up and officers guarding the Neiman Marcus entrance, the march went in the direction of the 610 Loop. With officers in tow on foot and on horses, they were eventually stopped near a gas station driveway about 100 yards before the freeway and told they could not walk further. This infuriated the protesters, who demanded to know why they couldn’t cross a simple driveway, on sidewalks, with no intention of taking the freeway. However, the police held their ground with a horses-and-officers blockade that would not budge.

For fifteen minutes, protesters aggressively inquired about the actual law regarding public driveways and peaceful assembly. Some directly asked the district attorney himself, who was on-hand. He refused to answer, saying, “I’m not here to give you legal advice. I’m just here to observe. If you have questions, you should ask your own lawyers.”

Some organizers favored staying put and continuing to challenge the officers and the D.A., while others said the march should just continue in the other direction. Eventually it headed back in a westward direction, then returned to Post Oak to march north on that street. The event ended with brief discussions at Waterwall Park.

The rally was spirited while it lasted. However, all agree that future actions will require more creativity and possibly even new locations to keep things energized and fresh.

#### DECEMBER 21

The next day, on Sunday, December 21st, about 60 people attended a candlelight vigil for Jordan Baker at the corner of Antoine and West Little York. At the request of the family, who were in attendance, there was no march but simply speakers who lamented the often inane, brutal contexts in which black men’s lives are taken. There were also moments of silence and prayers for comfort, solidarity, and healing. Attendees ended the gathering by singing “Amazing Grace” and exchanging words of hope that the grand jury’s decision, which was expected on Tuesday the 23rd at 9 a.m., would be one of justice for the young man, who left behind a seven-year-old son.

#### DECEMBER 23

A Harris County grand jury announced that the HPD officer who shot Jordan Baker was cleared of all wrongdoing. Protesters have called for a federal investigation, hired attorneys, and even reached out to the White House. They and the Baker family are disappointed and vow that large gatherings will protest the decision. **FPH**



# NORMALISTAS.



O N C E   A G A I N

BY ALEJANDRA IBARRA CHAOL  
ART BY VALERIA PINCHUK

**ON SEPTEMBER 26, 2014**, the local police in Iguala, Guerrero, Mexico kidnapped and presumably murdered 43 college students who were studying to be schoolteachers. In this story, one-time Rice University exchange student and resident of Mexico City, Alejandra Ibarra Chaoul imagines her grandmother (who is a graduate of the same teaching college from which the missing students were disappeared) learning and reacting to the news of the disappearances.

She picked up the newspaper with tired hands. For the past 90 years, every morning she had been raising her arms to read the newspaper, and for the last 42 days she had been raising them with fear. She was searching for any piece of information that could shed light on the missing normalistas.

With a firm shake of her wrinkled little hands, the paper unraveled itself and the words, printed in grey shades, displayed the news before her eyes. In a press conference, the general prosecutor had given a detailed account—based on the confessions of three recently detained suspects—of how the students had been burnt during the entire night and some hours of the dawn of September 26th and 27th, 2014. She lowered the light paper which now seemed immensely heavy, burdened by the news. The story told by the small letters in the paper seemed so unrealistic.

She was 18 when she started attending the Escuela Normal Nacional (National Normal School) for young girls. The year was 1941. Jews were being forced to wear yellow stars in Germany and Franklin D. Roosevelt was starting his third term in the US, while she was walking to the corner of Fresno and Ribera de San Cosme to take classes. She belonged to the second generation in her family to attend the Normal.

Her aunts had been the daughters of a beloved midwife in the small town of Mixcoac, and sisters of a soldier missing from the Mexican Revolution who was, at the time, thought dead.

Years earlier, her aunts had worn their black and white hats while walking the same path she now walked. It was the hats that would make them stand out as young teachers in a post-revolutionary Mexico. The country had torn apart and destroyed almost all the institutions belonging to the era of Porfirio Díaz, the dictator, yet one had prevailed. The model for schools that taught future teachers had been imported from France in 1887. It had survived the violence of war, being able to even keep its name: Normales, which had originally come from *norme*, the French word for rule.

Many, many years later she would learn that her mother-in-law and her husband's aunt had also been normalistas. They were the daughters of an accountant and sisters of a baby girl that had died in a wagon during a journey from the north of the country to Mexico City.

Her mother-in-law had been the grandchild of a Porfirian soldier who had lost everything during the Mexican Revolution. Her mother in law had been the first one in her family to study, leaving behind a life of piano lessons, embroidery, and knitting for the promise of a career.

That is how my grandmother walked the streets in 1941: with the weight of history and family tradition upon her. With the hope of Mexico's growing middle class. With the excitement of being part of the family's path. With the ideal of being part of the solution for her country. She walked while a changing world failed to notice her.





The world was simultaneously writing the story we would later know as World War II.

She pushed down the power button, clicking the television on. It's soft light brightened the room. Maybe she could find something about the students there. While absent-mindedly browsing from channel to channel, she thought about the normales rurales (rural schools for teachers). She thought about the girl from the state of Oaxaca who had worked for her. The girl had told her in her thick indigenous accent about her teacher from the mountains: the young man who had taught her how to write and read.

That teacher had left his impoverished home to go to live in the normal rural's boarding house where he himself would learn Spanish. Later, that young man returned to his community to teach. There, he taught the indigenous girl how to write, read, and even sew.

The little girl's mother would disappear for days in a row, leaving her behind with her siblings to care for their baby sister, protect her from wild coyotes. Her mom would remain absent for many days -- spending the little money they had on booze -- and the remainder of them passed out, faded in an alley. The normalista teacher, meanwhile, would teach the girl how to write, how to read, and how to sew in the rural school in the mountain where she would find refuge for hours.

She turned off the TV, depriving the room of the extra artificial lighting. Annoyed by the trivialization of tragedy, she turned her eyes away from the screen and went back to the paper.

Back then, women studied in the Nacional for young girls, while men lived in a Normal boarding school in Mexico City. President Álvaro Obregón, former general in the Mexican Revolution, had inaugurated the normales rurales in 1921. With time, succeeding governments had started to fear these rural schools, deriding them as communists, chipping away at resources and support and even closing several.

That was why lots of the boys from the Nacional came from Guerrero or Oaxaca. They came to the centralized system in Mexico City to learn so they could return to their communities with the they knowledge acquired. Most of them were indigenous peasants who had nothing left in the world but the broken promise of a failed war for land ownership.

My grandmother and her friends paid little mind to the boys in the Normal. They would have barely seen each other, had it not been for the Agricultural Activities class. There, the men helped the girls soften the soil with their shovels —as if the task that was so hard for the women represented a mere triviality for them.

My grandmother and her friends paid no attention to the boys until they grabbed the microphone. When they did, the girls turned their heads around to see, to stare. The men would talk, from the stand, about their godforsaken communities, about the missing roads, about the isolation and hunger. They would throw their dirt-covered fists in the air cheering for the Communist Party, castigating hegemonic ruling party that wouldn't do anything to help them out of their historical marginalization. My grandma and her friends would stand there, awestruck, and listen in silence.

After graduating, the girls could pick the school in which they would teach, based on merit valuations. They would all stay within Mexico City. Those with the lowest averages would go to the poorest and peripheral neighborhoods, while the girls with highest grades would be able to choose among renowned neighborhoods.

My grandmother chose to teach in an elementary school named Olavarría. She had started her life as a teacher during the protests organized by railroad workers and medics. Normalistas had always supported social movements, so they joined the demonstrations opposing low salaries, long workdays, and corrupt union leaders. Several teachers, my grandmother included, had ended up barricaded behind the rusty red door of a restroom. They waited there until the banging of the soldiers' rifles faded out. Years later, my grandfather would remember how his friends and he had seen a group of normalistas running from a pack of soldiers. He remembered how they heard gunshots at the end.

As the years went by the country changed, and so did the education system and its needs. One of her aunts, a well-known normalista, had gone on a government sponsored trip to the USSR. She was supposed to learn the structure of a new learning stage: the kindergartens. A new school for teachers had also been inaugurated, the Normal Superior, which was meant for teachers of junior high. For this new level of education, more specialized classes were required and new professors were hired.

After teaching some years in the Olavarría, my grandmother went back to school. This time she enrolled in the Normal Superior. Some of her new classes were Sociology and Corporatism. They were taught by Spanish republicans, political exiles from Franco who had taken refuge in Mexico. During those years, the student association organized conferences, inviting prominent people to address the students in informal lectures. That's how she saw and heard first-hand, just a few steps from her chair, the muralists David Alfaro Siqueiros and Diego Rivera avidly criticize the charros (union leaders imposed and controlled by the government).



This time her eyes focused on the ink of a second article in the newspaper. The prosecutor had finished the Q&A section of his press conference saying, “I’ve had enough.” He had had enough of speaking while the entire country heard, holding its breath. He had had enough of not having enough sleep while the parents of 43 missing students had had sleepless nights for over a month. He had had enough of explaining how, probably, 43 normalistas had been burnt by a criminal organization after the mayor of Iguala gave the order to kidnap them.

When she graduated from the Normal Superior she had gone back to teaching. Once she went to the Nacional to visit, but was surprised with what she found. The school now had only two or three groups out of the 10 it had had when she studied there. Eight groups had been closed. The government had reduced the capacity of the school and closed the boarding school for boys all together.

Decades later, she was working in a private school named Héores that had been founded in 1964, when the headmistress and founder called for her. She was a fellow normalista, Eva Sámano Bishop, but was better known for being the first lady: Mrs. Adolfo López Mateos. She asked my grandmother to sit in a meeting she would hold later that day. On that unassuming spring day a group of normalistas rurales from the coastal state of Veracruz were demanding to see the first lady. When they met, the normalistas asked for more resources for their school, for better employment opportunities, and for better salaries.

They hadn’t been the first to make the same demands. In the state of Guerrero, all the way from the Normal of Ayotzinapa, Lucio Cabañas and Genaro Vázquez had started looking for the same rights. They would hold peaceful meetings where they talked in front of normalistas-filled plazas. Cabañas and Vázquez had opted for the guerrilla in 1970 after federal police opened fire against civilians during one of such meetings. Othon Salazar (yet another normalista), on the other hand, had gone to Mexico City after graduating from Ayotzinapa. There he would lead the social fight from the capital of the country.

Railroad workers weren’t the only misrepresented workers. Teachers, too, had union leaders who would “negotiate” salaries on their behalf that couldn’t even buy them a decent meal. Salazar organized the protest against the teachers’ union (SNTE for its Spanish initials) from the poor neighborhood in Fresno where he lived. There, my grandmother and other normalistas would go listen to him speak. Salazar would lecture on the necessary fight for better teachers, better working conditions, and more

working benefits.

She lowered the newspaper. She had read all she could find about Ayotzinapa’s normalistas and gazed unimpressed at the rest of the news that seemed so irrelevant. She thought about the first days of 1941, walking to the tram on her way to the Nacional. During those days her mom would stay in the house while dreaming about being a teacher herself. Her aunts would walk the streets with their black hats, and the boys with shovels and dirty hands would speak vibrantly on the stand. The indigenous girl would learn from her beloved rural teacher, and a new social protest would supersede the previous one. She sat there thinking what being a normalista meant.

Closing her eyes, she put away the newspaper that now seemed like the heaviest thing on the world. Forty three normalistas. Forty three missing and probably murdered. Forty three defenseless in the hands of the corrupt local government. Forty three that would be no more. Forty three that, decade after decade, were still vulnerable and had still so many things to fight for. Forty three that would never go back to their communities to teach how to read, write, and even sew. Forty three that would not fill the absence of the state anymore. Forty three teachers working as crèches which would also operate as social services. Forty three normalistas from Ayotzinapa, once again.

#### EPILOGUE

Fifty four persons disappear in Mexico per week. In the first two years of Enrique Peña Nieto’s administration, 9,612 people have gone missing. The 43 normalistas from Ayotzinapa are not an isolated tragedy. They are, however, the most recent chapter of a community that has long fought for their rights against political corruption.

Today, December 17th, 2014, 82 days have passed since the normalistas disappeared. The scant traces of remains that were found in garbage bags were sent to Innsbruck, Austria for testing. We have had a single confirmation from the Austrian labs. One molar and a shred of bone were authenticated as the only remains of Alexander Mora Venenancio. It will probably be impossible to know with certainty that the other 42 students died there as well. Since the disappearance of the students, President Enrique Peña Nieto has traveled to China and Australia, but he has still not gone to the state of Guerrero. The president still mispronounces Ayotzinapa, adding an “n” to the end of the word. My grandmother, on the other hand, keeps raising the newspaper everyday to check on any updates. **FPH**





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## ILLUSTRATIONS BY

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### WORST WORST AWARD - TEXAS MONTHLY

Texas Monthly decided to give it's "Bum Steer of the Year Award" to Wendy Davis and her campaign to become Texas Governor. They even portrayed her on the cover stepping in cow patties in her famous pink sneakers.

But, as uninspiring and ambivalent as Davis's campaign may have been, it didn't cause any particular suffering. Contending that "nothing, and we mean nothing, could match the train wreck that was Wendy Davis, Battleground Texas, and the Democrats," Texas Monthly must not have noticed the more train-wreckly things that happened in Texas this year.

For example... Texas's new history, social studies and government textbooks will be used for a decade, and they will apparently treat Moses and Reagan like founding fathers, stress the influence of the Old Testament on the Constitution, include some new Islamophobic edits, and play down the importance of slavery in the Civil War. Or what about the Oklahoma / Texas leg of the Keystone XL pipeline? Of course, Rick Perry was indicted too, but he'll probably just run for President, or do like Tom DeLay and go on Dancing with the Stars and walk free. - *Nick Cooper*

### WORST OVERUSED BUZZWORD - GENTRIFICATION

Look, I know that gentrification and displacement of long-time residents is a real problem, an ongoing series of unique but similar tragedies, not to mention the uprooting of whole communities and their associated networks—these things matter—community is a real, human need. Sadly, we live in a city with an aversion to planning that defies all logic, whose policies favor haphazard, half-baked, piecemeal development and shoddy construction that pumps a lot of cash into the hands of developers in the short-term while leaving us all holding a bag of turds in the long-term. All that said, however, I still wonder if the most vocal critics of "gentrification" have thought through all the implications of their simplistic, knee-jerk critiques.

Are neighborhoods required to remain frozen in time? Are people not allowed to move in and out? If only black people can move into the Third and Fifth Wards, and only Latinos are supposed to move into the East End, and only gay people are supposed to live in Montrose...are these champions of the dispossessed not, in effect, supporting segregation? How is that different from saying that only WASPs can live in River Oaks?

And rather than blaming people who seek cheap rent in rapidly "gentrifying" neighborhoods after being priced out of other rapidly "gentrifying" neighborhoods, can we take a moment to evaluate how we got here? Houston experienced a big economic boom/bust cycle in the early 1980s. During the boom, a great deal of housing stock (mostly apartment complexes) were built on Houston's southwest side in neighborhoods like Gulfton, Sharpstown, and Alief. When the boom went bust, developers lowered rents to attract tenants and a big exodus of black and brown people left the 2nd, 3rd, and 5th Wards for "greener pastures."

Those who could move, who had the means to move, moved. They abandoned their neighborhoods to blight rather than staying put and building infrastructure (including credit unions, if you want to say that banks weren't lending money to buy homes or start businesses in the hood). You still see a lot of these former residents showing up for church in the hood on Sundays in their fancy cars and stylish gear.

I understand that something like \$100 billion leaves the Third Ward every year because residents have nowhere to spend it, not even on essentials like food and clothing. Are the people who abandoned their neighborhoods rather than forming co-ops and

credit unions to purchase property and make improvements that would lift up the many—providing jobs at locally-owned, minority-owned businesses—without blame for the current spat of "gentrification?" Is the displacement of long-term residents and established communities the sole fault of white artists, students, and service workers who are east and north because they've been priced out of the Heights and Montrose?

Give me a break! Shit's more complicated than "White people shouldn't move to certain areas." If now-prosperous former residents of these "underdeveloped" neighborhoods had stayed put, purchased property, and built up prospects for themselves and their communities rather than fleeing to the suburbs 30 years ago, we could have thriving independent communities of color ringing downtown Houston rather than crumbling shotgun shacks and empty, overgrown lots and the ugly, isolating townhomes that are popping up all over. - *Harbeer Sandhu*

### WORST DIATRIBE AGAINST GENTRIFICATION - ANIS SHIVANI'S "HOW OLIGARCHS DESTROYED A MAJOR AMERICAN CITY"

Gentrification is a phenomenon that is ripping apart many Houston neighborhoods. This is something about which many diatribes should be written, however, one that made a big splash with national online outlets but makes a weak case for Houstonians is Anis Shivani's "How Oligarchs Destroyed a Major American City" which was originally published on Alternet, and has subsequently been picked up by Salon.com and Billmoyers.com.

It is a long article, well-intentioned, and addresses an urgent issue, however, it is jumbled, has a limited understanding of the city's history, makes confusing and possibly harmful recommendations, and holds up the Upper Kirby Neighborhood as the center of the struggle against gentrification.

A line by line rebuttal would fill half of this paper, Some of the biggest things that make this the worst:

- Shivani argues that Houston has been "transmogrified by a brutal strain of neoliberalism." Houston has pretty much always been organized the principles of brutal neoliberal capitalism. We are a city where the monied elites have just about always gotten what they want, and where zoning was never created, allowing private developers to make the city as they wanted.
- The history of gentrification in Houston is long and there have been notable struggles against it. This has mostly taken place in low income communities of color, like Fourth Ward/Freedman's town, where activists have struggled to preserve Houston's first Black neighborhood and have lost battle after battle to brutal neoliberalism.
- Centering a neighborhood like Upper Kirby is strange, in a city that is more than two thirds people of color and has a median household income a little over \$40,000, Upper Kirby is 70%+ anglo and a median household income of \$70,000 (per COH Planning Dept stats on Upper Kirby/Greenway Plaza Super Neighborhood).
- It has a bizarre allegation that the city killed trees in Memorial Park to allow for redevelopment, when these trees died during the 2011 drought.
- The recommendations are structured around what could have preserved the author's apartment complex, rather than what is likely to stop gentrification. They include the idea "neighborhoods should be equalized rather

than pitted against each other.” While not very clear, it sounds like NIMBYism. “Don’t gentrify Upper Kirby, go gentrify somewhere underdeveloped, like the Wards.”

Shivani spoke to the Houston Matters radio program and he touched on many issues, but some of his focus framed the value of preserving housing for middle income people at the expense of the poor:

“The residents that are being removed, now we are talking about middle-income people. It’s a misapprehension to think that it’s just low-income people, people who could easily live somewhere else. People who own property, people who are contributing members of the community to displace all of them—then you’ve lost the character of the community.”

Shivani is right that Houston has historically been affordable because we have lots of land and not as much demand to live here. That has changed, housing costs are skyrocketing and there is basically no plan from the public sector to create the amount of affordable housing that is needed in a city where a quarter of residents live below the poverty line. He is also right that displacement of residents is a form of violence, and one of the stronger parts of his article profiles neighbors who are being displaced by brutal neoliberalism.

One good thing about this diatribe is that it has inspired others to write better diatribes. Google Raj Mankand’s article on the OffCite blog “Nine Ways to Make Houston Affordable (Again)” for a good one. One thing that this should inspire is a movement that pushes for Houstonians of all economic and cultural backgrounds to have the right to fair housing and not be displaced from their communities. That will take a huge amount of effort, as it runs against the grain of this property rights and brutally capitalist city. - *Rob Block*

#### **WORST FAT-FACED WEASEL OF A POLITICIAN - DAN PATRICK**

The Greek philosopher Aristophanes wrote that the characteristics of every popular politician are “a horrible voice, bad breeding, and a vulgar manner.” While I cannot attest to Dan Patrick’s lineage (his pre-bankruptcy surname was Goeb), I do believe he might be the most dangerous politico in Texas today. Jumping on the wave of mid-term anti-Obama hysteria, the Senator from Cypress rode into the Lieutenant Governor’s seat after the incumbent torpedoed his own campaign.

\*Note to David Dewhurst: Don’t get involved in a mud-slinging match with a former radio shock jock.

If Tea Party sycophants were mountains, Patrick would be Everest. He has spent the last eight years in office spreading an agenda so far removed from rational thought one wonders if the residents of Tomball (where he receives most of his support) are stuck in a dimensional vortex where time cannot move past 1950. Patrick’s public gaffes are too numerous to mention but suffice it to say that his political philosophy is reminiscent of John Lithgow’s character in Footloose. Anti-gay, anti-choice, anti-immigrant (one of the few politicians who still supports Arizona’s insane SB 1070 Act), Patrick would also like to establish creationism into the public school curriculum. When he is not attempting to boycott the Houston Chronicle, Patrick can be found squabbling with other politicians. John Carona, a State Senator from Patrick’s own party, referred to him as “a snake oil salesman, a narcissist that would say anything to draw attention to himself.”

It is this level of self-aggrandizement that Dan Patrick truly separates himself from the pack. Like his counterpart Sheila Jackson Lee, Patrick uses pop culture to further his own devices by exploiting controversial issues. It was at this time last year that our new Lieutenant Governor commended Duck

Dynasty’s Phil Robertson for his anti-gay remarks (Robertson equated same-sex relationships with bestiality). Patrick said that God was speaking through the bearded reality star. Does anyone else not see the writing on the wall here? If history serves as any sort of indicator on these things, it is just a matter of time before Patrick calls a press conference to explain that he was simply lost when he was arrested at Austin’s Oil Can Harry’s. Those poppers found on his person were obviously planted by the godless liberals/ Texas Monthly liars/ Kenyan Obama.

“Methinks the lady doth protest too much.”

Get him out. - *The Giving Steve*

#### **WORST RESPONDER TO MY TWEETS - ANNISE PARKER**

Annise, anytime I, of the people, have a suggestion or ask for a ReTweet on-line regarding something that would be rad for the city, you ignore me with the cold wind of silence. My tweets have ranged from “@AnniseParker let’s build a rail from the inner loop to Chinatown in Bellaire so we can all eat that food more often” to “@AnniseParker, Children of Pop are playing a free show at House of Creeps tonight! Can I get a RT?”, all of which have gone unheard.

While I cannot directly blame your lack of response to my tweet as the sole reason these things aren’t happening, I can say the ReTweet button doesn’t take very long to hit and as long as it’s not anything deprecating to your platform, I don’t see what it would hurt for some of the people whose votes you’ll eventually want (20-30 year olds, the smallest voter turnout demographic), to see you as one of their own. Keep on keepin’ on Annise. - *Shelby Hohl*

#### **WORST NEW SOCIAL MEDIUM - ELLO**

If a tree falls on Ello and there’s...never mind.

See you over on google+. - *Harbeer Sandhu*

#### **WORST HINDERANCE TO LOCAL BUSINESS - COMCAST**

Consider this: The fastest internet service provider in Houston is Comcast, yet as I type this at noon on a Saturday, while listening to the shrillest, most obnoxious hold music ever produced (Tim Carleton & Darrick Deel’s “Opus No. 1”— according to Shazam), there is a city-wide outage that isn’t going to be resolved until 10pm. What does this cost someone who relies on the internet to make money? Much more than the \$2 credit Comcast offers if you call in and demand a refund for a day’s outage.

Comcast suuucks. For years, they have won first place as Worst Company in America in countless polls. Even their own employees have a hard time not expressing this sentiment. I’ve been to hell and back with Comcast over the last few years and would need several hours to write a full report of my experience, but as quick recap, since January 2014, I’ve spent over 30 hours on the phone troubleshooting my connection and removing unapproved charges from my bill.

Last year, I was told by Comcast that I needed a second modem in my home if I wanted good wireless reception, but I would have to set up and pay for a second account. So I tried that. But when a tech discovered that the primary modem was faulty and sent out a new one, it turned out that the secondary account was never necessary and we paid over a thousand bucks for a year of service for no reason. When reiterating this scenario to the wireless gateway team (the only reps worth talking to at Comcast) they were sincerely dismayed that I had been offered such an expensive and complicated ‘solution’ to a problem that came back to a well-documented issue with the model of modem they shipped to me. But really, what can we expect from a company whose own employees are embarrassed by the subpar service they represent?

I learned that the best sources of information for what equipment not to buy and what worked



best came from the mouths of Comcast's tech support babes. I bought my own modem, a model one of the reps had in their own home, and not one provided by Comcast, of course. Why pay \$10 a month (a price increase of \$3/month in the last 2 years) for junk equipment that Comcast's own reps directly stated was notorious for not working?

The billing statements are ridiculously complicated, intentionally so, I believe. I started hacking away at every extraneous billing item possible to simplify the statement. I cancelled the secondary internet account. I cancelled our cable package. All I wanted was decent steady internet access. After 86ing these other services, my bills still showed all kinds of extra charges for rented equipment I had returned and TV/Cable fees I no longer used, like a \$4.99 TV protection plan that stayed on the bill for 4 months after I'd cancelled our cable, and \$12 for 'Blast!' to bump up my internet speed when a rep told me this didn't benefit me since the modem I had wasn't configured to be affected by Blast!

For anyone who has had a costly and difficult experience with this ISP, it's incredibly frustrating to know that the only other 'competition' is AT&T, who offers a whopping 18MBPS compared to Comcast's 50MBPS (which is just a number they advertise—I've never experienced this speed, though I've been regularly billed for the fastest speed they offer). For those of us who rely on the internet for our incomes, it's terrifying to even entertain the thought of Comcast merging with another major company while not being able to provide reliable, quality internet access to their current customers. The FCC has ignored/deleted/tossed hundreds of thousands of comments against Net Neutrality that Comcast is pushing for so they can force customers to opt-in to a 'fast-lane' at a greater cost.

This is a very small portion of the bullshit I've dealt with as a Comcast customer. Repressed memories are surfacing as I write this, so I have to stop now and do some breathing exercises, maybe burn some sage. This ISP giant is already too big. It will ultimately fail. It is failing right now. But please, examine your bill for charges you didn't approve, and always call 1800-Comcast and demand a refund every time your service goes down. Tweet about it. Be even louder and more obnoxious than their torturous hold music, because we really don't have any choice right now other than to force those fuckers to be an ISP we can depend on. - *Andrea Afra*

#### **WORST CORPORATE PINKWASHING - BAKER HUGHES WANTS TO FRACKING DRILL YOUR PINK BITS**

We all know what "whitewashing" means — to cover up wrongdoings or other ugly things with a thin, superficial coat of BS. In this era of post-industrial environmental crises, you might even have heard of "greenwashing," or cheap public relations stunts that big companies like British Petroleum are wont to pull, like rebranding themselves "Beyond Petroleum." But "pinkwashing?"

According to Think Before You Pink, a "pink-washer" is "A company or organization that claims to care about breast cancer by promoting a pink ribbon product, but at the same time produces, manufactures and/or sells products that are linked to the disease."

In a recent stunt, local oilfield services company Baker Hughes announced that they are donating \$100,000 to the questionable Susan G. Komen Foundation and painting 1,000 of their drill bits pink. Ironically, the Center for Disease Control reports that breast cancer is on the rise in communities near fracking sites, despite its decrease everywhere else, and the breast cancer rate in six Texas counties near fracking sites is 20% higher than it is in the general population.

Don't believe the hype. If you want to wear pink, wear pink. If you want to help fight breast cancer, support Breast Cancer Action. - *Harbeer Sandhu*

#### **WORST I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT THE FUCK THAT WAS - ICE BUCKET CHALLENGE**

Seriously—what was that? The only one I liked is the photo with a black dress and a broom and pointy witch's hat in a heap on the floor with the caption, "Ann Coulter's Ice Bucket Challenge." Blondie done melted, ha! Now remind me what that had to do with funding ALS research. - *Harbeer Sandhu*

#### **WORST ATTEMPTED LAND GRAB - MIDTOWN TIRZ'S MONTROSE ANNEXATION**

"We'll drink their milkshake!" shouted the Board of the Midtown Redevelopment Authority as they schemed to annex select portions of Montrose into their tax increment reinvestment zone... Or maybe no mention of milkshakes was made, but the effect would be just the same, with the Midtown TIRZ slant drilling past Montrose's historic districts and other residential neighborhoods to tap areas slated for massive new construction projects. Doing so would have allowed the Midtown TIRZ to siphon off the increased property tax dollars resulting from the new developments while ignoring the desperate infrastructure needs of the majority of Montrose.

And they would've gotten away with it too, if not for former City Council Member Sue Lovell and other civic leaders, who demanded that the annexation be pulled from the City's agenda to allow for a public meeting in Montrose on the issue. Soon enough, Lovell and over 200 of her Montrose neighbors were face-to-face with the Midtown schemers, who quickly dropped their cherry-picking property tax grab, trashing a plan that was months in the making and only a few days away from becoming law.

Montrose definitely needs new streets and sidewalks, and maybe a TIRZ is the way to accomplish that, but not one that has been gerrymandered by and for Midtown. It's okay to love thy neighbor, but don't covet our shit man. - *Jason Ginsburg*

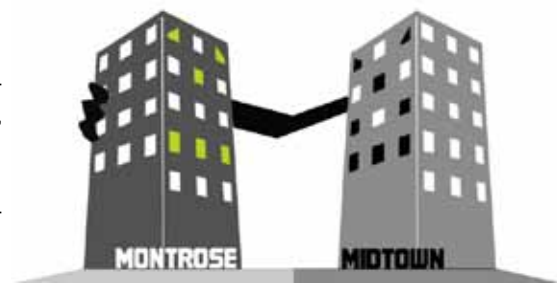
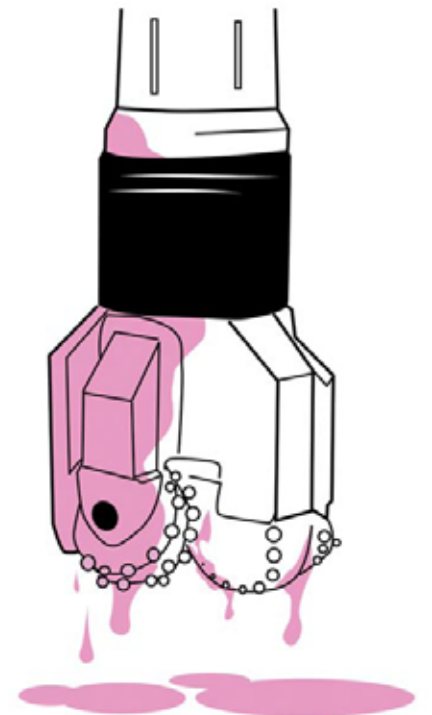
#### **WORST WAY TO START A SENTENCE - "YOU KNOW WHO YOU GUYS SHOULD GET FOR SUMMER FEST...?"**

Nah, we have no idea who we should get for FPSF. More often than not, we usually get next year who we wanted this year so, basically what the means is, whatever you're about to suggest, we already thought of and for some reason or another it won't work out. To debunk the "punk-rock" myth that seems to plague every suggestion we hear is that, honestly, EVERY SINGLE BAND WANTS A SHIT TON OF MONEY. Especially the really broke punk bands and lesser known acts that we'd rather have play than most of the headliners. The reason we do or don't get who we get is almost 100% due to money, or Primavera, and fuck, who WOULDN'T rather be in Spain that time of year? - *Shelby Hohl*

#### **WORST MAVERICK LONEWOLF REBEL COWBOYS - TEXANS**

How is it that Texans love their bow-legged, swash-buckling, chest-puffed-out, rugged individualist, "go it alone," rebel tough guy image so much? It makes absolutely zero fucking sense. It just does not comport with reality. Any time you hear something about a person putting up the slightest bit of resistance to an out of control bully cop or boss, Texans want to blame the victim.

"Well, he should have just bowed down and kow-towed to the cop," say most Texans. "Me, I always call cops 'sir,' say 'please' and 'thank you,' because, you know, they're special and they are superior to the rest of us so we should just take whatever they dish out."





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Seriously, Texans? I mean, you can be a bunch of spineless, blame the victim, beat down, submissive punk apologists for illegitimate authority if you want... but you can't be that way AND keep your rebel tough guy self-image.

And Texans betray the same attitude whenever someone stands up to a big immoral company that's poisoning our beloved land, air, and water, too. I mean, just look at Free Press Houston's own Worst of Houston issues over the years—how much do Texans regularly hate “protesters?” But who are the real maverick rebel lonewolves standing up for what they believe in the face of such hostility—the protestors or the ones saying “Love it or leave it,” just like the Founding Fathers once said. (Wait, no, the “Founding Fathers” told their rulers to shove it—starting with the very act of property destruction from which the Tea Party derives its name, ironically enough.)

Despite its image, Texas is more like the Deep South than the Wild West. You people have a plantation mentality—in your colonized mind state, any slave who demands to be treated with dignity is just asking for it. Texans need to either grow a backbone and stand up to illegitimate authority, or just admit that they're a bunch of beat down, submissive chumps fighting each other for whatever scraps the powerful will toss at them. - *Harbeer Sandhu*

**WORST MISPLACED INDIGNATION - HOUSTONIANS REACTION TO THE SONY HACK**

Because I live in Houston, I can only comment on Houstonians on this; but the reaction I heard to the North Korea/Sony Pictures hack was almost as funny as it was disgusting. I heard more people up in arms over how this action was “a threat to our national security” and how we “shouldn't let Commies dictate what films we see.” Let's get this straight, people are super pissed because another Seth Rogen stinker wasn't released, but they are on the fence about the abuse of power from police and questionable actions by grand juries in Harris County and across the nation?

Sony is a giant corporation first and foremost, and this is their problem, not of any citizen who isn't tied to that company. I mean, Sony was set to make a “21 Jump Street” & “Men In Black” crossover film; and we are actually holding them in high regard? Secondly, North Korea is about as threatening as a four-year-old with one of those foam Minecraft swords. They have trouble launching missiles and they don't have the money or the infrastructure to be a real threat to anyone here.

We live in a country that tortures innocent people, where we help giant companies before we help each other with our many problems including inequality, scofflaw bankers and cops, and expensive but inadequate health care. How about we get angry over these things first—then we can get upset over what happened to a company? - *David Garrick*

**WORST TREND IN BUTT-CHUGGING - HUMMUS**

Surely you've heard of butt-chugging by now—there was a rash of college students going to the hospital a couple years ago for alcohol poisoning from wine and vodka enemas. Well, this year we learned that the CIA has been “rectal hydrating” terror suspects (1/5 of whom were falsely accused) by lying them on their stomachs with their feet higher than their heads and then sticking tubes up their butts to pump in filled with pureed hummus and and pasta and raisins.

“No need to squeeze the bag,” reads the CIA's torture manual, “let gravity do it's work.”

Yeah, gravity, because it's all downhill from here. (More like let depravity do its work.)

Dickheads like War Criminal Dick Cheney try to deflect attention from their crimes by pointing to 9/11, except the Senate report that detailing this torture

says that these were useless exercises—they gleaned no new actionable intelligence. And on top of that, let me repeat that 20%—one out of five—of the people we tortured did nothing wrong, they just got picked up because they had the same name as a terror suspect or were in the wrong place at the wrong time or got falsely accused by someone who had a personal beef with them.

Dear Central Intelligence Agency: We get that you and the former frat boys who comprise your workforce get off on hazing and rape and coercively sticking things up each other's butts, but if you really must seek novel ways to ingest hummus, could you just chop it up and snort it like the rest of us? And stop torturing people, you sick fucks, you make us all look bad. And let's prosecute these sadistic cretins, can we, please, America? - *Harbeer Sandhu*

**WORST IMPORTATION OF PACIFIC NORTHWEST DEMOGRAPHICS TO A HOUSTON PUBLICATION - HOUSTONIA MAGAZINE**

SagaCity Media began publishing Houstonia Magazine in April of 2013. Their previous work has been with magazines in Seattle, Portland and Park City, Utah. It is understandable that they are used to having overwhelmingly White publications in these overwhelmingly White cities. However, according to the City of Houston planning department, Houston is scarcely 25% Anglo. Still, SagaCity Media has put together a magazine in Houston whose editorial staff appears to be 100% White. Things like that don't just happen by random chance in Houston—it takes effort to arrive at such a homogenous group in this diverse city.

Houstonia describes its target audience when it talks to its advertisers about their readership: their readership is majority female, and the majority work in Executive, Professional or Managerial professions (20% hold executive titles). The average household income of a Houstonia reader is \$189,889. The average household income for Houston ranges from \$42,000 in the city to \$58,000 in the greater metropolitan area. Whichever way you slice it, Houstonia serves a wealthy upper crust of the city, which it's safe to assume, is overwhelmingly white.

The actual City of Houston is one of the most international and diverse cities in the country, and one with rampant inequality. That Houstonia does not seem to care about those with lower incomes and the people of color who make up most of our city is a structural feature of their business model. It also seems to mean that they don't need any people of color on their editorial staff, and that they don't need to consult residents of low-income neighborhoods about what nicknames they use for their communities because they will soon all be gentrified out.

Houstonia's Houston is a whitewashed utopia straight out of the movie Elysium, not the diverse and polyphonic dystopia that Houston represents to most of us. - *Rob Block*

**WORST CUTTING OFF YOUR NOSE TO SPITE YOUR FACE - RICK PERRY'S REFUSAL TO EXPAND MEDICAID IN TEXAS**

Despite passage of the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare), I didn't buy private health insurance for a few different reasons: I don't like the federal government mandating that buy a product from a private company; I don't like the protections given to insurance companies, pharmaceutical companies, and corporate chain hospital conglomerates; I don't think that a profit-driven health system is good public policy; I don't like being denied a “public option;” and I hate that our spineless president entered negotiations by saying that “single-payer” was off the table rather than using “single payer” as leverage to argue for a “public option.”



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But the main reason I chose to be fined rather than be coerced into buying private insurance is that all the plans available to me on the Texas Exchange is totally impractical—I'd be paying a steep ass monthly premium only to have a steep ass annual deductible. It just doesn't make sense.

The reason the Texas exchange sucks so bad is because our Governor Goodhair refused federal money to help expand Medicaid in Texas. He thinks it makes him look fiscally conservative, i.e. good with money, but it's actually costing Texas tons of money—something like \$10 BILLION (with a b).

If Perry wasn't such a douchebag, Texas could insure 1.2 million more people than it already does, which would have created 55,000 jobs between 2014 and 2017 and brought in \$13.7 billion in federal spending while increasing our state GDP by \$3.1 billion just in 2014 and \$10.42 billion over the next three years.

Way to go, Perry. It's no wonder you and your school board want to dumb down education standards in our fair state, too. A sick, overworked, under-educated population totally serves the needs of your ilk, even if it is bad for democracy. - *Harbeer Sandhu*

#### WORST HOBBY: HOBBY LOBBY

Time to get your glitter and glue someplace else, crafters, this for-profit corporate chain is owned by some right-wing Christian fundamentalists who don't want to pay for their employees' birth control...even though they invest in a "wide variety of companies producing abortion and contraception related products." Too bad their "Christian values" don't preclude them from selling products made by veritable slaves in sweatshops, too. - *Harbeer Sandhu*

#### WORST MEDIA OVERSATURATION BY A SPORTS FIGURE - JJ WATT

Not since the days of George Foreman slinging grills on infomercials has such a media blitzkrieg taken place by a professional athlete. While JJ Watt might be the most dominant defensive player of his generation, his perpetual appearance hamming it up on Houston televisions in HEB, Papa Johns, and Ford commercials has gotten completely out of hand. It is nonstop. I invented a drinking game for Texans games where you take a sip of beer each time Watt appears during a commercial break but had to quit after three of my friends died of alcohol poisoning. Before half-time. And Watt looks the exact same in every single advertisement: Texans jersey with rolled up sleeves, Costco brand jeans, and the corniest bunch of bullshit lines you've ever heard. To call his acting "forced" would be an insult to middle school improv troupes everywhere. His dancing in that ubiquitous Verizon commercial induces nerd hypothermia even in a 70 degree winter. Stick to opposing teams' quarterbacks, JJ, unless you can get me a discount on flowers at HEB for the three funerals I now have to attend. - *The Giving Steve*

#### WORST ATTEMPT TO CASH IN ON HAVING QUEERS IN THE BACKGROUND - THE WILD MOCCASINS' "EYE CANDY" VIDEO

Ooh, step back, girl, I'm about to throw some shade! Apparently, Houston's beers, steers, and queers are definitely worthy of national attention, but only as a grotesque caricature of predatory hornballs in the background of a hipster music video. The Wild Moccasins' "Eye Makeup" music video follows the same easy boring "straight person in shady gay sub-culture" theme that we've seen a million times just short of a dropping the soap gag.

Gay guy hits on presumably straight guy at a urinal? CHECK! Shocking and offensive? Hardly. Uncomfortable to watch? Absolutely...in a constant eye roll and UGH sort of way. The most cringe wor-

thy moment wasn't the wig snatch, but the suggestion that all it takes for little miss lead singer to be a drag queen is for her to paint sunglasses on her lady face in a few minutes with a paper plate full of glitter (no doubt bought at Hobby Lobby).

The red headed dude's ONLY purpose in the video is to piss the whole time so he can serve as set-up for a joke that goes something like, "One time, I was at a gay bar, and this gay dude hit on me while I was at the urinal!" That's all he does in the whole video. He's the set-up for a dumb, predictable joke.

I'm sure Wild Moccasins will say the song lyrics are artsy and meaningful, tell you that the music video is art and open to interpretation, feed you some word candy about how it was filmed at Robert's LaFitte in Galveston and how historic it is and how the queens from Robert's LaFitte are in the video (as if marginalized people never appeared in a minstrel show promoting problematic stereotypes). Yawn. Please just tell me why everyone looks so damn bored at this drag show!

And these aren't candid shots from a wild night out on the town—the band and video director talked about this and wrote it out and made storyboards and shot multiple takes and then edited it all together. None of this is accidental or random. All of it was done for a reason.

Everyone seems to be doing this drag queens and tgirls are cool when it comes to our style, and we are such a current event that they just gotta feature us as wallpaper in their music video to make it relevant, but NPR did a story on this video without noting its problems because the Wild Moccasins are supposedly one of Houston's best local bands? Bitch, please. - *FrouFrou T'Pebbles*

[Ed. Note: For really sexy rendition of what I think the Wild Moccasins were aiming for in this video, check out The Kills' "Baby Says" video. Yowza!]

#### WORST CULTURAL APPROPRIATION - WENDY'S

I am not sure which instance of appropriation is worse—Wendy's attempting to mass-produce BBQ with their pulled pork cheeseburger, or the commercial they made to promote it—which appropriates the language used to critique and discuss injustices to sell diarrhea on a bun.

BBQ privilege can distort your worldview...says wrestler "Stone Cold" Steve Austin. Although I grapple with justifying cultural appropriation and globalized society, and although tender BBQed pulled pork atop a juicy cheeseburger on a soft brioche bun isn't authentic Texas, it is authentically delicious. So go to Wendy's and experience your new right to BBQ pulled pork...[Emphasis added.]

By exercising its privilege not just to appropriate but to capitalize on this language,

Wendy's trivializes the very concepts of race/gender/class privilege, a globalized monoculture (i.e. cookie-cutter corporate chains like Wendy's), authenticity, and even universal human rights.

So, to whom does this commercial actually appeal? The educated liberal class most likely to know these words is probably least likely to buy a pulled pork cheeseburger from Wendy's—less likely than Jews and Muslims, even. If you read between the lines, though, the ad reveals it's true brilliance as an appeal to "working-class culture" against "elite culture"—it's real message is, "Show those liberals that you're a real American by eating subsidized diarrhea that will give you heart disease and colon cancer." The rebel sell. - *Harbeer Sandhu*

#### WORST DOUBLE-BOOKING - PRIDE PARADE ON JUVENTEENTH

One day in November, a few of us were approached by a good friend in reference to Pride Houston's event



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being moved to the weekend of Juneteenth festivities. I knew of the move and how many in the GLBTQ felt about it. I was not ready to be in a place to choose between being Black and Gay. In general, I feel attacked by the predominantly religious Black community, and then struggle to fit in with my Caucasian counterparts in certain settings of the mainstream GLBTQ community. With all of that in mind, a group of us met with three people from Pride Houston, behind closed doors, to explain and make a case for the date to be moved.

One of the biggest elephants in the room was the fact that during the fight to get the Houston Equal Rights Ordinance (HERO) passed, a majority of the Black and Latino communities stood against its passage. Which meant that a move of the prominent Gay Pride event to a historically significant weekend to Blacks in Texas essentially looked like punishment for the lack of support for HERO. While I and many of the other persons of color who attended this meeting with Pride Houston supported HERO in its entirety, we knew that having a Pride event the same weekend as Juneteenth would damage relations between the Black and GLBTQ communities.

We met, we talked, and we were told "We will get back to you in two weeks." About a week later, we got a letter stating that the board of Pride Houston will not be moving Pride back to its original weekend, which coincides with Stonewall history. Blog posts were made, phone calls were placed, letters were sent, and anyone who is anyone got involved in the Houston community.

Now I could talk about and quote many of the things that were said by members of the Pride Houston board, but at this point that would be petty. Let's just say that situation highlighted what has come to be called "intersectionality," or struggles between different marginalized communities (and even within individuals) to value or devalue each other when, in fact, we should be working together in spite of any differences. There is work that needs to be done, and it goes much deeper than the issue that arose with Pride Houston. - *Ashton Woods*

#### **WORST MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING - PEOPLE TRIPPING OVER SUBPOENAS OF PASTORS' STATEMENTS**

Houston gained nationwide notoriety over the HERO litigation back and forth which included portions of local pastor's statements in regard to that case. So fucking what? I don't hold religious officials in some unwarranted high esteem where they are not subject to the same lawyering the rest of us are subject to. You see, we have wonderful laws in this country to keep churches out of politics and government out of houses of worship. Since 1954, federal law has prohibited religious organizations from intervening in political campaigns or they would otherwise lose their IRS non-profit status and be forced to pay taxes like the rest of us. Sadly, these laws have been flouted over the last several years and churches are beginning to outright endorse candidates. My message to these butthurt churches: stay out of politics if you don't want to be subpoenaed. - *Omar Afra*

#### **WORST WAY TO TREAT CONSTITUENTS - HOUSTON ISD SCHOOL BOARD RUNS AND HIDES AND DOES WHAT IT WANTS**

After months of strong opposition from parents, students, teachers, administrators, community leaders, and education experts, the HISD school board voted on two potential school closings in March of 2014. With over 80 individuals slated to comment and an overflow room where the meeting was being screened on closed-circuit television, the community was des-



perate to be heard. As the meeting progressed, the audience became increasingly frustrated while board members fidgeted, avoided eye contact, and sat unmoved by their constituents' pleas. Two hours into the meeting, the audience could no longer tolerate the injustice and began chanting against the superintendent "Fire Terry Grier," at which point the board members retreated to a back room and police officers surrounded the attendees.

Despite the community's clear disapproval of the action, the school board decided to close a gem of an elementary school in the Lost Ward, Dodson Elementary, under the pretense of using the space for students whose schools are under construction. It will be interesting to see how much money HISD makes from the sale of this valuable little property, instead. The second school, Jones, "survived" the closure and was re-opened as a career readiness academy students normally zoned to Jones now need to apply to attend.

Thanks for everything, HISD, once again you have stayed true to your mission of "providing a high-quality education for every child, regardless of where they live or what school they choose to attend." - *Paloma Garner*

#### **WORST POOP SLAB - THE \$1.5 MILLION DOG WASTE PARK**

Dogs don't need much to be happy. Give them some affection, a soggy old tennis ball, and a wide open place to run, and they're perfectly content. That's why I'm having so much trouble comprehending the need for the new \$1.5 MILLION dog park being constructed at the corner of Montrose and Allen Parkway. For years this area was used as an "un-official" park for dogs to run and frolic amongst themselves or their peers. There was plenty of room to play frisbee and roll in the lush grassy field, a nice green oasis in the middle of a dense, monster condo sprawl. Now, after being closed for over a year, the park is starting to take shape as a hodgepodge of lakes, gates and a bunch of other unnecessary bullshit.

According to [buffalobayoupark.org](http://buffalobayoupark.org), a group of friends (several rich old white people who most likely have/will never set foot there) got together to donate money for the butt fucking revitalization of the park, in honor of their pal Johnny Steele. Johnny is a landscape design artist(?) who has scaped (I'm making this word up for all the hipster landscape artists out there, you're welcome) some pretty high profile locations in Houston and around the country. Some of his clients include River Oaks Country Club, Rice Music School Courtyard, New Process Steel and loads of private residences belonging to a much higher income tax bracket than you or I. But I digress.

The park is now equipped with a lot more cement and a lot less grass. It promises to be an overcrowded clusterfuck. A place where people can bring their pooch to be crammed into one of the gated areas, where there isn't much room to do anything except take a shit and look at each other. GLAD WE GOT OUT OF THE HOUSE FOR THIS! The opening of the park is set for January 2015, and it's sure to be the next hot spot for dudes with calf implants and girls with vodka soaked tampons.

Maybe, I'm being a bit too rash. Perhaps I have some displaced anger issues and the park will be the greatest of great successes. Or maybe I'm sick and tired of seeing our city, which was perfectly fine before the mass influx of money hungry oil tycoons, being gutted of any semblance of originality in exchange for cheaply constructed, overpriced, new modern crap castles. Either way, I can't help but think that this new dog park is the perfect metaphor for what Houston is becoming. An expensive, highly stylized place to shit on. - *Bobby Haworth*



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#### **WORST SUPERMARKET - KOMBAT KROGER'S IN EASTWOOD**

EaDo needs a grocery store! - *Ray Sanders*

#### **WORST JAIL - HARRIS COUNTY JAIL.**

Jailed on a probation violation for possessing marijuana, Terry Goodwin was left locked in his cell for weeks in disgusting conditions. His cell's drains were clogged with feces, toilet paper, and also orange rinds in an apparent attempt to mask the smell. A sign attached to the door instructed jailers never to open it. Styrofoam food containers were passed in through a slit in the door and jailers never came back to collect the trash, resulting in massive piles of trash. His mother and his lawyer attempted to visit him and were told that he didn't want to see them. As Harris County Sheriff Adrian Garcia mulls a run for Mayor, it's important to remember this modern-day Bastille that is being operated in Downtown Houston. - *Kyle Nielsen*

#### **WORST SELECTIVE SECRET-KEEPING - FBI**

In March 2014, it came out that back in 2011, during Occupy Houston's camping protest, the FBI uncovered plots that involved the execution of members of Occupy Houston through coordinated sniper fire. The plotters' names, let alone any investigation or arrests, were never announced, and the FBI denied the vast majority of a Freedom of Information request for documents by claiming that they had already given the information to local law enforcement, who were helping them to determine if Occupy Houston was planning to overthrow the US government. The documents that were eventually released were heavily redacted.

Folks from Occupy Houston were never charged with sedition but wondered why they weren't even informed that they were in danger. To this day, none of the endangered Occupiers have been told who the alleged assassination plotters were - *Nick Cooper*

#### **WORST HOUSTONIAN - THOSE THREATENED BY TRANSPLANTS**

If you're one of those Inner Loopers that's scared as hell about transplants and gentrificwhatever and real estate development, then you're too late. Being scared is not enough. The evils of change and money shift are here and there's no going back.

Yes, it's a sad truth. One of the strong contributors to this change is "The Rise of the Transplants." Everyday more arrive. Everyday. New people from Dallas and Denver and Ohio and New England and Arizona and Portland (maybe, I don't know) arrive everyday to start their new life here in Clutch City, TX. With these transplants comes also their hometown culture which has woven itself into their lives just as Houston's culture has to us native Houstonians. Many Houstonians fear that these transplants will dilute our common bonds and remove our shared grit. To those fearful many, I say... Shut up! Houston is inside of you, like a pervy old man. And soon that pervy old man will be inside the Transplants and they, too, will come to accept that cowboy hats and banh mi sandwiches exist in perfect harmony here in Houston. - *Mills-McCoin*

#### **WORST EXCESSES OF HOUSTON PRIDE - SUBURBANITES WHO CLAIM HOUSTON**

As someone who has only lived inside of Houston city limits for about five years, I think I'm almost at the point of understanding hometown pride and becoming a person who can say that Houston is my hometown. It is a place that still fascinates me and annoys the living fuck out of me all in the same breath. It's a place truly impossible to fully uncover. Whether it's new businesses opening every day or old relics being torn down for condos, it's a home I believe I've earned, which is the main point of what I'm getting

at. I know I'm not a life-long resident, but I think I've earned the right to call out my suburban peers with this message.

I know it sounds whiny, but whenever I see someone whose mail gets addressed to Clear Lake or Texas City and they are captioning a photo they took on the outskirts of 610 on their way to Boondocks with the words "I love my city!" it's a special kind of annoyance that pings through my head. This isn't your city. You haven't earned it.

You haven't put in the work of suffering through River Oaks traffic or getting lost trying to figure out if the shitty art show is at Summer street, or Silver, oh wait it's Spring Street and there's no parking, then you haven't earned this ugly city of ours. If the coolest place you've been to is "This really AMAZE-BALLS cafe called Agora," or you've said the phrase "Oh Brazils, that's by Shaws right?" then really dude, just enjoy the pizza and go back to Bay Area.

If you get upset by this and your argument is that "H-Town is state of mind," then you've already proven my point. You don't get to fix your moms iPhone and call yourself an Apple employee or scroll through reddit news comments and call yourself an expert on foreign policy. In conclusion as aggressive as this comes off, you don't have to fuck off or pass some stupid Montrosean citizenship test, just admit you're a weekender and stop taking up all the parking. - *Blake Jones*

#### **WORST PLACE TO SEE A CONCERT - CYNTHIA WOODS PAVILION**

For a venue that is constantly hosting nationally respected artists, it is BULLSHIT.

First and foremost, it's NOT HOUSTON. The Woodlands is a hell of a trip to make. Not to mention the dreadful traffic you have to endure on I-45 to get there. It's a fucking journey. Might as well hit up Austin for a REAL concert experience.

At the pavilion, theoretically, you get more buck for your money in that you get closer to the stage the more money you pay. Well guess what? No one fucking sits at shows anymore. The seats are smelly and uncomfortable anyways. Want a better view? You can pay an even pricier ticket to experience the world's lamest 10-person mosh pit at the very front of the stage. Or, you pay 25 dollars and you sit at the lawn. And at that point, you would have a better view from the comfort of your own home on your TV screen. Sitting at the lawn guarantees you a shit view of the stage and a half-shit view of the TV monitors.

It is a venue that shamelessly wastes great talent and opportunity for incredible performances. This venue creates a huge barrier between artist and audience. It has absolutely no sense of community and lacks performance-intimacy. You go to a concert in the attempts of making a connection with the music and the performance. The environment and ambiance of a concert is well over half of the actual concert experience. You get none of that at the Woodlands.

Save yourself the money and aggravation and check out some venues actually located in Houston. You shoulda come to FPSF, Lana. - *Marcela Arevalo*

#### **WORST ARTS-FUNDING ORGANIZATION OF 2014 (& 2013 & 2012, ETC) - HOUSTON ARTS ALLIANCE**

Houston's artistic community needs public art, and public art requires funding. Unfortunately for artists and arts organizations alike, much of this funding (as well as other critical grants) come from the Houston Arts Alliance (HAA). Over the past few years, HAA has seen a lot of change, both in terms of its leadership and its direction as an organization. Some people are okay with it, many are not. This year, the arts community has seen a lot of turmoil connected to HAA, and it's not likely to get much better in 2015.



Many credit (or blame) HAA's CEO Jonathan Glus for these changes, and that holds fairly true. He's the guy at the top, but as anyone who works in an arts non-profit knows, the board also needs to be held responsible. When you look at HAA's board of directors, as well as the Advisory Council and let's just throw in the Civic Art Committee, too, you have to wonder where the artists are. There are a lot of respectable people in these groups, but they aren't people who have the same knowledge of the Houston community that artists or even arts professionals have. That's more of a general issue and not 2014-specific, though, so let's stick to what's been going on this year.

"Recently 19 mid and smaller sized arts organizations met with the CEO to protest the Grants Program and the haphazard and unprofessional way that program was being run," Michael Peranteau of Art League Houston commented on a Glasstire post. He's referring to issues within (what should be) HAA's main if not sole responsibility: the distribution of the Hotel Occupancy Tax to Houston artists and arts organizations. From the organization of the grants themselves to the lack of certain opportunities for artists to awarding grants late, HAA dropped the ball and provided little to no explanation, which leads to another issue: transparency within the organization.

For a major funder of the Houston arts, HAA lacks a lot of transparency, and this year seems to highlight that it's because they're looking to protect themselves. This past fall, HAA's civic art department was contracted by the George R Brown Convention Center to choose an artist within a certain budget and see his/her project through to its fruition. What should have been a relatively simple task (as large-scale public art installations go) has been complicated and shrouded in a cloud of mystery that leaves little more than rumors to go on, so here are the (probably true) rumors:

The Civic Art Committee (CAC) met with now former Director Matthew Lennon. A process was laid out that was typical to the structure of the Civic Art Department. A list of artists was provided to the CAC, and they agreed to the artists but left the process to the department. Artist Ed Wilson's installation was chosen by (those who chose to) vote. A CAC member wanted them to choose a different artist, one whose work happens to be in his personal collection, and they pulled Wilson's contract. In protest, Lennon resigned, stating "Ed Wilson, and the other artists, followed the procedures provided. A professional panel with stakeholder representation was formed. Ed was selected unanimously by a blind vote. Derailing that process is naïve and insults everyone engaged. Depriving Ed Wilson of his commission is unethical."

Through and through, there are a wide variety of problems within the Houston Arts Alliance - some mentioned here, some not. Here's hoping a new year means a new start. - *Michael McFadden*

#### **WORST LOCAL MUSIC- CHOPPED & SCREWED**

I get it. It's a style of music unique to Houston. We all know how much Houston loves Houston based shit. But can we PLEASE stop chopping and screwing every last bit of music that is produced? I respect DJ Screw and I like his music, but honestly, I almost lost my shit last week when I heard the Star Wars theme chopped and screwed. - *Zazil Farfan*

#### **DUMBEST GRIEF - THE CLOSING OF VAN LOC**

Are you one of the Houstonians that freaked out when Van Loc closed? That's fine if you had your first date with your partner there or something like that. Otherwise, what's wrong with you? There are hundreds of Vietnamese restaurants in town that are just as good. Ten are within walking distance of the Van Loc



location. If you think that no other Vietnamese restaurant in Houston could ever be as good as Van Loc, can we ask you how many you have tried? - *Nick Cooper*

#### **WORST LOSS FOR MSG JUNKIES - THE CLOSING OF VAN LOC**

For 28 years, Van Loc made middle of the road Vietnamese fare awesome by super-dosing it with industrial grade MSG. Sure, the food may make you intermittently hallucinate and cause you spine to seize, but their sauces and flavors danced on your tongue like some sort of mono-sodium-fantasy. And despite adverse effects from MSG such as muscle degeneration, facial pressure, difficulty breathing, swelling of the prostate, and slurred speech, we all knew the main ingredient in Van Loc's food was love. - *Omar Afra*

#### **WORST CITY NAME - HOUSTON**

If we have to name our fair city after a white man then it might as well be Patrick Swayze. I mean, does anyone really have a deep connection with Sam Houston anymore? Doubtful. But man oh man, Patrick Swayze has been in my heart since I was born here...in Swayzeland, TX, the fourth largest city in Uhmerikah!

Doesn't that already sound better? Swayzeland, TX. As for naming a city after a country, we already have a Rome, TX, a Carthage, TX, and a Palestine, TX, so the more you think about it, the more it makes sense!

The people in New York and Britain can have their House-ton. They can choke on it if they please. But down in Swayzeland, TX, we pronounce the word "Houston" with a killer dance move and a jawline you could shave metal with. - *Mills-McCoin*

#### **WORST NICKNAME - SPACE CITY**

I must preface this by proclaiming my love for the city and it's unique nicknames. I guess I should also preface this with my extreme loathing for routine and repetition. This way you can be made more understanding of why this term irks me so. The name was cool in the seventies when the underground newspaper, Space City, was still published, but now it's worn out it's charm. Must this name apply to EVERYTHING in Houston? Google "Space City," go ahead. There's a plethora of local establishments that pop up. Musicians, vintage stores, soccer clubs, credit unions, production companies, cycling clubs, rock climbing clubs, fucking FRISBEE teams... The list is endless and does not fail

to invite a lack of originality, creativity, or any sort of true representation of the "Space City." - *Zazil Farfan*

#### **WORST HOUSTON DRIVER - YOU**

Everyday I drive to work. Everyday you people get in my way. Stop it. No one should be allowed to drive in front of me. If I need to start a petition, I will. However, I'd prefer that this matter not require such legal proceedings.

If you all would just wait to start driving until I get to work, which would only take me seven to ten minutes at the most, then I think we'll all be able to make a little more money and have less stressful lives. Instead, what we have now is people thinking that a slow moving car is a safe car... and that's just not true at all. In fact, it's that kind of thinking that causes this "traffic" problem.

Let's examine how time works in relation to driving a car, shall we? Firstly, if you are in a car then you are 100% more likely to get in a car accident than if you were not in a car. Now let's factor in some minutes. If you are traveling in a car for five minutes, you are 50% less likely to get in a car accident than if you were traveling in a car for ten minutes. That's science right there. The faster you drive, the less likely you will get in a car accident. It's just science, Houston. And it's not even the hard kind of science like they at NASA. And do you know how fast those scientists drive? So fast they exit our atmosphere.

If you want to get somewhere in town, just GO! But most importantly, get the fuck out of my way. - *Mills-McCoin*

#### **WORST SIGN OF ANOTHER MONTROSE INSTITUTION ABOUT TO CLOSE ITS DOORS - MANGO'S PAINT JOB**

This is almost too easy. Under the cover of night, the punk club Mango's at Taft and Westheimer, went from its familiar green, unassuming facade, to what Domokos from Future Blondes described as an after-school special Rec Center. Now, I don't hate graffiti at all, and some of the shit on the building is actually decent art, but some of it is fucking atrocious and all of it smashed on top of each other made it almost impossible to look at.

The place doesn't make a shit ton of money but it has stood as a beacon for under-current punk/ noise/ electro/ anything weird, shows since we at FPH reopened it in 2007 during a Westheimer Block Party. Prior to Mango's it was The Oven, which saw a lions share of DIY punk and indie shows for 10+ years and established the location as a hotbed of rad, subversive art for Montrose and the Inner Loop altogether.

When the current management decided to paint the fucking place like a piñata in the cover of night as a quick cash-grab to make up for suffering sales, it seemed to have a completely opposite effect on the neighborhood and the people that frequent the venue. I was told it was done in part to draw the new-money yuppies in the area to the place so they'd spend their money on beers there, seeing it as a "Whoa, this place has graffiti, it must be edgy!" location. I have a lot of friends who are yuppies and even they think it looks like dog shit. Thankfully, the place couldn't even hold its doors open long enough to test this theory as the location is now up for lease. Hopefully, whoever reopens the place continues the long standing tradition of businesses that have defined that corner in Montrose for the past 20 years. R.I.P Mango's with green paint. - *Shelby Hohl*

#### **WORST CROWD AT ANY GIVEN VENUE - HOUSTON AUDIENCES**

I go to a lot of live shows, so I've gotten used to being at a concert where there are no less than twenty cell phones in the air at any given time, and that's not so bad. But whether it's a concert or a comedy show, it

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seems like a lot of people went to the show to have a conversation, and not watch the talent everyone else paid to see. The worst part of this behavior is that it's a crappy and self-involved way to interrupt the artists and those around you. If you're in the back of a room, or near the bar, it's a little easier to forgive. But when I'm in rooms as small as Mangos, Rudyards, or downstairs at Fitzgerald's, and you're talking, then you're a jerk who should have either stayed home or gone outside. This also includes people who yell out at a comedy show, people who take a phone call, and people who keep the flash on their phone and blind an entertainer by taking a blurry pic.

It's not just lay audiences who exhibit this behavior either. I've watched people I know are performers talk three feet from a stage. I mean, I get the fact that you feel important because that kitten video you posted off of reddit got 43 Facebook likes, but please; on behalf of everyone else at the show...shut the hell up and have a shred of respect for those around you. - *David Garrick*

#### WORST PIZZA - BAMBOLINO'S

People actually put this pizza into their mouth. - *Omar Afra*



#### WORST WASTE OF SPACE - CORNER OF ALLEN PARKWAY AND MONTROSE

In 2006, The Aga Khan Foundation purchased the massive swath of land at the Southeast corner of Allen Parkway and Montrose. This sprawling piece of property is centrally located, is adjacent to some of Houston's most beautiful natural landscapes, and could serve so many important purposes.

For nearly 10 years, there have been rumors that this property would be developed into one of the largest mosques in Texas, and I am excited for the controversy that will most definitely ensue once that begins to happen. But that said, having such a huge property with huge potential stay dormant and fenced off in the interim is a missed opportunity.

If I had my way, folks would be allowed to play soccer there, a massive urban garden could be temporarily installed, and the space could serve as a rad destination along the Art Car parade route. - *Omar Afra*

#### WORST FEEBLE, SEXIST, PATERNALISTIC WHOLESALE CHARACTER ASSASSINATION FAIL - FURCAS WATCH

Brandon Darby is a former anarchist activist from Pasadena who was later outed as an FBI informant and eventually became a right wing media celebrity. Though the seasoned, non-violent organizers he worked alongside for years evaded Darby's attempts to "escalate their tactics," he did eventually persuade a couple of impressionable kids to participate in a plan to firebomb some parked and empty cop cars at the 2008 Republican National Convention in Minnesota. The plan was foiled before anything happened because Darby wore a wire the whole time; the kids did some time in jail despite the clear entrapment from Darby and his accomplices in the FBI; and Darby was outed as the snitch that he is.

A few years before Darby there was a woman named Rhea who it later turned out had been snitching on local Earth First! activists. In California in 2006, another snitch/provocateur who went by the name Anna entrapped three members of the Earth Liberation Front by hatching plans and even buying gasoline with her own credit card to firebomb a forest genetics research facility. In England, it recently became known that at least two undercover police officers infiltrated animal rights and environmental groups and then went so far as to have babies with activist women without revealing their true identities (and then walked out on the babies, but that's a different story). And in 2012, the FBI revealed that a

former Field Marshal of the Black Panther Party, the man who provided the Panthers with guns, Richard Aoki, had been an FBI snitch for over 15 years in the 60s and 70s.

What do all these snitches have in common? They were all undercover! And they all entrapped people by aggressively attempting to escalate conflict.

Back in April, some brave, anonymous, self-styled "radicals" here in Houston decided to out someone they accuse to be a snitch...except the guy has never hid the fact that he's a cop!

I met David "Furcas" Hayes on the first day of Occupy Houston, October 6, 2011. He was introduced to me by a mutual friend, and four of us spent the better part of that day together.

It's no secret—I don't like cops, and protest like the first day of Occupy Houston gives me myriad excuses to just run my trap. Through it all, that whole day, I maintained an ongoing, steady commentary on the depravity of police. It was not until later that day, when a few of us went to Warren's for some martinis to help us spend that night on the sidewalks in front of city hall, that I learned that the man I'd been railing on about cops all day was in fact a cop, himself!

So back in April, some anonymous activists made a website "outing" the already out police officer who was moving around casually, among the ranks of Houston's left-wing radical scene. Initially, the grossest thing about this page was the way it dragged Hayes's sister into an unprovoked mudslinging match that had nothing to do with her, but that was later removed. As it stands, the grossest remaining thing about it is point number four, in which these anonymous activists stake a claim of ownership of the bodies of women in their scene, to wit, "David Allen Hayes has engaged in sexual advances/activity with activists (including with those who are MUCH younger than he is)."

Now that's what we call "Klassy with a capital K." Do you creeps have any idea how this makes you look? You don't own those women's bodies and for you to think you have any right to an opinion as to what they do, consensually, with anyone else is going way too far.

This is not a wholesale testimonial on behalf of David Hayes. He is my friend, but I also understand that he is a cop, and as a cop he is an instrument of the law enforcement/criminal justice systems of a corrupt and oppressive state. In the eyes of the law, cops are better than you and me, and they believe this when they act like the biggest gang in town—protecting their own before they protect the public. His badge and uniform dehumanize him in that they elevate him above his fellow citizens on the streets, in the courthouse, and even as a casualty.

However, any seasoned activist also knows that sometimes people on the inside can be allies and assets, and practices such as "security culture," in which information is shared only on a "need to know basis," are the only time-tested means to defend against (preempt) leaks of sensitive information. I mean, do these geniuses actually need to be told not to share plans about illegal activities with an out and open cop? (Never mind that none of them are even organizing any such actions because they couldn't organize themselves out of a wet paper bag if their lives depended on it.)

I am not defending David Hayes—I am sure he does stuff at work that goes against his conscience, as many people do, and he has said some boneheaded things—as all of us have. Nor am I compelling anybody to trust him—I'm just saying this is about the dumbest "gotcha" I have ever heard of. You people outed as a cop someone who has never hidden he's a cop. That makes you look really, really dumb. And if there are people out there who need to be told not to tell a cop about possible, alleged crimes, then I trust those idiots even less than I trust the self-acknowledged cop.



It's really sad to think that people would stoop so low just to feed their own delusions of grandeur. You wish that you were under investigation and worthy of infiltration. Smh. - *Harbeer Sandhu*

#### WORST PLAN FOR HOLDING COPS ACCOUNTABLE - THE DA/GRAND JURY SYSTEM

There's a cliché in the legal world that speaks to the ease a District Attorney actually has in obtaining an indictment from a grand jury—"You could indict a ham sandwich." Grand juries pretty much just do whatever the DA tells them. An indictment is not a conviction, though, so the burden of proof is much lower than in an actual trial. A grand jury indictment just means that there is enough of a case to take it to trial, to investigate the question of guilt or innocence a little further.

But here's the rub: district attorneys work hand-in-glove with police officers most of the time. They rely on evidence and testimony from police officers to prosecute bad guys...but if the bad guys are police, themselves? Get it? If a DA chooses to pursue an indictment against a cop who has violated the law, s/he runs the risk of losing the support of a whole institution that s/he needs to do her job.

Maybe this is why it has been over 10 years since a Harris County grand jury indicted a cop. In late December, a Harris County grand jury no-billed a police officer who shot a person for the 289th consecutive time since 2004. This man, Jordan Baker, was 26 years old and his crime was allegedly looking like one of three robbery suspects.

It's high time Houstonians demanded a civilian police oversight board with subpoena power, because expecting the DA to pursue prosecution against her/his own private army, ever, is a ridiculous conflict of interest. - *Harbeer Sandhu*

#### WORST SANCTIMONIOUS SHOPPER - IAN HAMER

On December 6, protesters took their protest inside the Galleria, and according to ABC13, they even caused several stores to close temporarily, including Neiman Marcus, Microsoft and Macys! So, that's kinda cool, if you're down with the whole "black lives matter" movement, but there are some folks who more dearly value shopping rights.

Also according to ABC13, shopper Ian Hamer said "I think everyone has a right to protest what they believe in, but coming inside of a shopping mall and disrupting everyone else's normal lives is uncalled for... They're talking [sic] away the police force that needs to be out on the streets protecting us."

The implication here seems to be that protesting is ok, as long as it is done in a deserted alley. At any rate, the idea that shopping should be held as a sacred act that should never be interrupted even when people are dying, is an odious one, but it's somehow also very All-American. - *Nick Cooper*

#### WORST OF THE WORST OFS - 2013

I've submitted to the "Worst of" edition of Free Press Houston since it started. I look forward to contributing to FPH, a paper I appreciate. I have a lot of respect for the FPH crew and assume it's a mutual thing.

Sometimes, I like to write entries that could cause problems for me in my work life, as I might run in the same professional circles as my subjects, but the wonderful freedom of anonymity allows me to be more frank than I might otherwise. I have asked for my name to be withheld twice over the years. Once, years ago when I wrote about a funder of the major institution where I work, and last year, when I wrote about a member of my loose professional associations.

The first time, my name was attached to it anyway and I thought I might get some blowback (I did call him a war criminal, after all) but nothing happened. I made fun of the mistake to the editors, they

apologized, and I kept writing my annual submissions. Last year, once again, I asked that my name be kept off my stories and was promised that it would be, but yet again, it wasn't. When the story came out, there was my full name, printed under my submissions.

But it didn't stop there. My name was also printed under other people's submissions—including a super-hater one about Houston that I never would have written. After I complained, the online story was fixed, but when the print paper came out, there it was again, in all its utter fuckedupedness. It's one thing to stand behind your own calling people out, fine, but it's another thing altogether when people think you wrote some crap on Houston piece. So, I won't write any this year. Starting now. - *Name Withheld*

#### WORST LITTERBUGS - HOUSTON SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT

You must have heard Zeno's paradox about Achilles and the hare. If not, I'll explain it by way of metaphor. Let's say you have to cross a room. To cross the room, first you have to go half the distance. Once you go half the original distance, you must traverse half of the remaining half..and then half of that...and then half of that...so truly, you can never really cross the room because you're stuck in a cycle of going only a fraction of the distance.

The same can be said of Houston's automated garbage trucks. These are the trucks that lift up our wheeled garbage cans, dump the cans' contents into their open tops, and then bring the can back down to the curbside before driving away.

The problem is that to dump the garbage from the can to the truck, the robot arm must first dump half the contents before it can dump the second half. Unfortunately, these very intelligent robot arms and their human operators take Zeno's paradox literally. Recognizing the futility of removing all the garbage, in a fit of existential angst, the crushed and defeated robot arm brings the garbage can back down to earth with such force that it flings the garbage remaining in the can all over curbs and sidewalks.

A few days before this Christmas, my neighbor's garbage can launched a plastic supermarket bag filled with dog poop at the tree in front of our building, where it caught in a branch like a little Christmas tree ornament. Thanks Houston Solid Waste Management Department! - *Harbeer Sandhu* **FPH**



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