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★ JUNE/JULY 2015 ★

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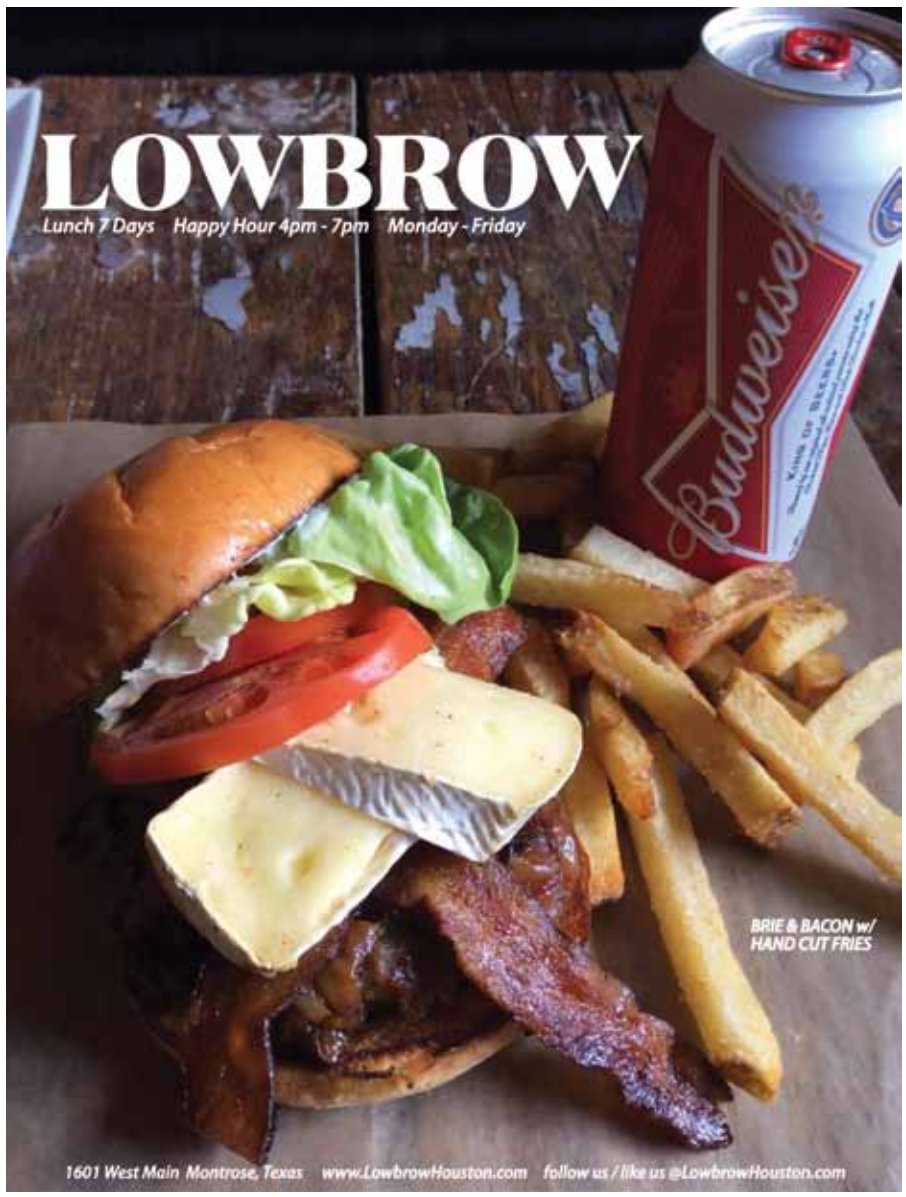

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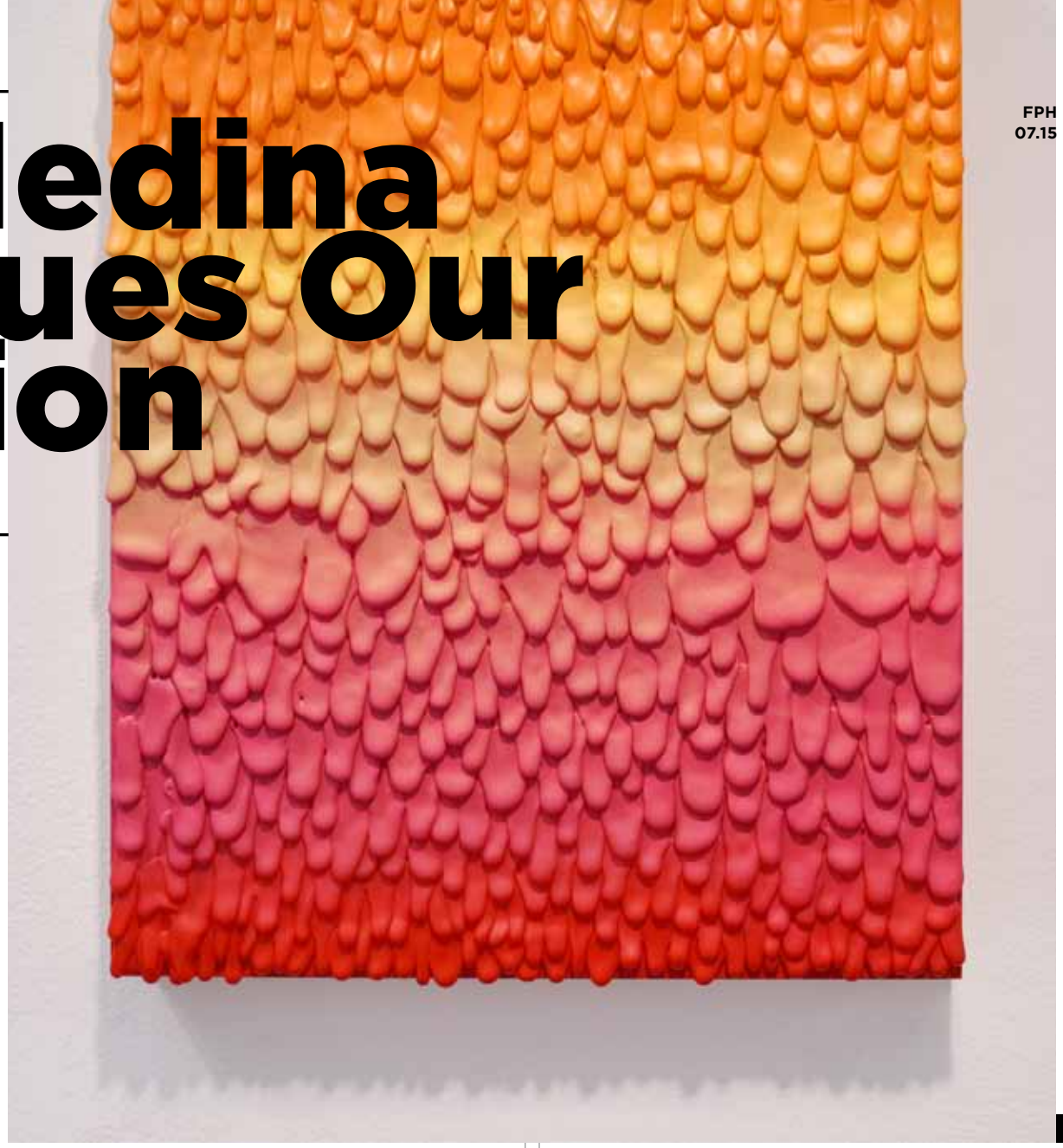
Letter from the Editor

"THEY'LL NEVER ACCEPT YOU" is what my scrappy Uncle Farouk used to repeat so often as he wagged his fingers at me whenever I brought friends of the Anglo persuasion home to hang out after school. He shared this fear with so many other first generation immigrants after having stomached his fair share of intolerance once moving to this country. Despite loving this country and moving mountains to make it his new home, people made him feel as if he didn't belong. I had not thought about his repeating that phrase like a mantra to me until recently. Funny story. During the build out days preceding FPSF, I tied a flag to my golf cart as I always do because it makes me easy to find and frankly, I enjoy being a clown. This year, I decided to zip-tie a Palestinian flag to the cart as opposed to the usual Lebanese flag to honor the place of my birth. I chose a Palestinian flag to show solidarity with the plight of Gazans. It's also just a dope looking flag. I don't really vibe on nationalism of any kind, but flags are fun. Sometimes. On the second day of the festival, I was cruising down a cart lane which sat between two fences: On my left was the festival grounds, and on my right the fence which folks walked past as they headed to the entry gates. Zipping down the lane at max speed (11mph) to pick up a friend from the entrance, a sudden flutter of red, white, and blue flew like a javelin past my face. I barely had time to inch my neck back just enough so this projectile didn't hit me. Once it landed with a big KLANG, I looked down and saw an American flag strung up on a lacrosse stick. A dude bro had climbed up the fence and waited for the moment to launch the flag at my head as I passed by. People in carts behind me yelled and tried to point the culprit out but he had disappeared into the throng of festival goers. Instantly I thought of Uncle Farouk. I still think he is wrong but I guess I get it. What's really hard to articulate though is the complex relationship Americans like me have with this country. But one thing is for sure: I like apple pie. My wife makes a killer chocolate pecan pie. I can name almost all members of the original Skynyrd lineup. I drive places I can easily walk to. All those things are pretty American, I think? And to the person that lobbed this flag at me, you can have this flag back if you come to our office and ask for it politely. Just promise not to throw it on the ground again.

John Medina Hot-Glues Our Attention



An Interview by Adam Mrlik
Photo by Iva Kinnaird

WITH JOHN MEDINA'S WORK'S DRIPPING and dropping from the walls, textures and colors take center stage in the hallway gallery space at Art League Houston. Being taught since birth to not touch the art, I let my intrigue get the best of me—but instead of violently jabbing the canvas I decided to learn more about these works and the artist behind them.

The work has a texture to it that makes anyone that comes near it want to touch it, which is ironic because you are told not to touch art. Is this deliberate?
When I was younger, my mother really got into crafting. It wasn't uncommon to come home from school and find a hot glue gun sitting on the dining room table. If you leave a glue gun unattended for a while it will eventually start to drip. This happened all the time in our house. My mother would get busy doing other things and the glue gun would drip onto the table. Fascinated by the clear, jewel-like droplets I would reach out to touch them, only to have my hand slapped away by my mother who warned that I would burn myself. I really enjoy the fact that people are so attracted to the textures of my paintings. I like to watch as they reach out to touch the surfaces only to retract their hands at the last minute as if there is some sort of invisible force field around the panels. The viewer is experiencing my own desire to touch something that I wasn't supposed to. Its a sort of primitive urge that can be overwhelming at times. In my case, I gave in to my urges and eventually burned myself with hot glue. Viewers may find that touching art may have its own set of consequences.

What artists are you inspired by?
I've always been inspired by artists who have a strong narrative in their work. Ken Little has always been an inspiration of mine as well as Vincent Valdez. Two very different artists, but I like the way they tell stories. Their work is very much about where they are from and as a viewer you get a real sense of who they are. Their work can talk about universal themes, but it is done through a very personal lens.

Dario Robleto is another dude that just blows my mind. First of all, his titles are poetic and I've always enjoyed a good title, but his materials lists are fucking epic! I mean, it's like bone dust from every bone in the human body, melted vinyl records salvaged from the sea, paper made from the shredded love letters of wives and girlfriends writing to civil war soldiers and stretched out cassette tape consisting of sounds recorded from melting glaciers. There's a real sense of history to his work because of the materials he uses. I get it. I've always been very meticulous about the materials I choose to work with. I think about him a lot though, because you have to wonder, does this guy just know where all the good estate sales are or is he just really good at Ebay? I mean, where does he get all of his materials? I mean, it's one thing to grind up old Dianna Ross records, but where the hell do you find "Men's wedding ring finger bones from various American wars?"

How do you think being raised in Texas, a southern, more conservative state, influenced you and the way you make your art and portray messages in your art?
Growing up in Texas taught me to be rebellious. I learned to question everything from an early age. I also learned that there are systems in place that you either work with or you work against, like religion, politics, culture and gender roles. I grew up in a conservative, Catholic community. People expect you to be a certain way and to do certain things. So okay, I tried to like football and I tried to develop a taste for menudo and I tried to wear clothes from the mall and I tried do well in Sunday school, but in the end it wasn't who I was. I just didn't always feel I could say it out loud. There were real consequences to that, the least of which is that people will talk shit about you. So my artwork became my voice. I learned to stay true to myself and communicate my perspective to people who may not have agreed with me. But subtlety is key. I think people are prone to listen to you as long as you don't scream.

The textures in your pieces looks like slime, or something melting - there must be some sort of connection here.
In this case the surfaces are representations of melting ice creams, however, that is not to say that hot glue isn't a part of a much broader narrative. Certainly there are ties between hot glue and my childhood, and in some ways it's an homage to my mother. I get my creativity from her and I like that her influence can play a role in my work, even if it's not about her. The truth is, most people don't respect hot glue as a fine art material and surely they don't expect much from it. People are often surprised to find out what I can accomplish with craft store glue sticks and spray paint. There is an unexpected beauty in these works. In many ways, hot glue is a representative of myself.

How do the bright, vibrant, almost neon colors reflect your serious subject matter?
This body of work ultimately deals with the fleeting nature of life, love and success. The vibrant colors represent those perfect sweet moments frozen in time, while the melting texture is meant to be foreboding. While I want the viewer to revel in that exact moment, I also want them to think about what came before and what comes after.

You seem to have a sense of humor concerning serious inquires about life and society.
As I get older, I've decided that it's okay to be funny and playful. I think there's a mischievous quality to the work. Its a much more accurate depiction of my voice.

What are some things that you question about our society that directly influences your work?
The media, for sure. The way that we consume information. Anybody can publish whatever they want and some yahoo out there is gonna believe it. Recently there was that FIFA VP who quoted the onion during an interview. I mean, that's crazy! We're able to craft our own little worlds now by surrounding ourselves with the articles, opinions and studies that agree with our crazy whims. Before long we won't know what to believe. Everybody will be both right and wrong and it won't matter who's telling the truth. That's scary to me. FPH

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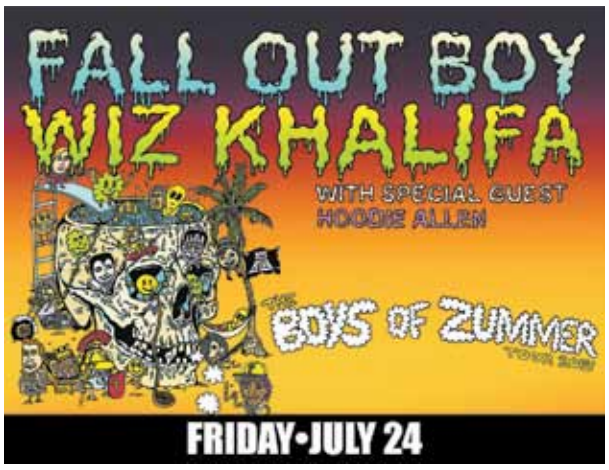

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"...and I like chicken fried"

-Oak Leaf Smokehouse

By Alvaro Chivas Fernandez
Photo by Harbeer Sandhu

"AND I LIKE CHICKEN FRIED, a cold beer on a fried-day night, a pair of jeans that fit just right, and the radio on." Other than the pun I couldn't resist adding, those are the famous words of one of my favorite bands—Zac Brown Band. What can I say, the song "Chicken Fried" speaks to me; it grazes my brain-heart in the same way that the year's first cool night's breeze grazes my face and reminds me that there are moments of my Houston life that don't take place on top of a puddle of my sweat. So, to me, it comes as no surprise that when I was blasting that song and saw the sign for Oak Leaf Smokehouse, I absolutely knew that I had to stop by and eat there.

I had driven by the Dumble and Telephone Rd intersection a number of times but had not really noticed Oak Leaf before. In part, I think I hadn't noticed this place because it's decently sized parking lot was always empty when I drove by. As stated above, I was jammin' out to some pop country (#pcp, #popcountrypunx, #datlyfetho #2frat-2care) so my country mindset enabled me to spot this spot.

The first thing I noticed as I was pulling into a parking spot is the RV just chillin' in the back (by the way—I say 'chillin' instead of 'parked' because it is pretty apparent that that RV had not been moved in a bit). Instantly I got a good feeling about this place. After walking into the restaurant itself, I can tell you that I was not disappointed. Many of y'all who've been there might be a bit confused about my lack of disappointment; however, I challenge you to look once again.

Oak Leaf Smokehouse—the physical building—is pretty barren. It's the barrenness, however, that gives it its charm. The smokehouse is essentially four walls with one wall-wide menu and one set of longhorn horns hanging right above the menu. That, I think, is the way smokehouses should be—to me it says, "We mean business, you are here to eat not to sit in a pretty room made to distract you from your food." It's a shame, however, that their food did not say the same.

I'm a very indecisive person, so I asked the cashier what his favorite thing on the menu was and he stared at me not knowing what to say and then stared at the menu and said, "Try the Chicken Fried Brisket."—literally the one item that is bigger and bolder than anything else on the menu. Don't get me wrong though, the cashier was super nice and really tried to help and be cordial—there's only so much anyone can say about a restaurant when they don't eat there.

The food came out in a jiffy. Upon seeing the plate I knew that something was amiss—chicken fried brisket should not look like something that an Iron Chef came up with. I never thought I'd see a plate so faux-gucci-ly dressed at a smokehouse. I sat there poking at my food for a couple of seconds wondering, "Why do these veggies look like you're SUPPOSED to eat them?" That, the veggies, the thinly sliced deep-fried onions artistically placed on top of the gravy, and the fact that the BBQ sauce was on a very small plate on the side made me question every single life decision I had made until that moment. Until then I had never been to an artsy smokehouse; a smokehouse that did not force you to drink 25 gallons of their BBQ sauce and whose pickled veggies were strictly for decoration purposes.

Not entirely discouraged I dug in. It turns out that the veggies were in fact meant to be eaten and so were the x-tra thin onion rings covering the chicken fried brisket so naturally I just set those aside and went to town on the mashed 'taters and brisket. The chicken fried brisket was not bad, especially once it got cold (not kidding either, I took it home and placed it in the fridge) but by far the best part of my meal were the mashed potatoes covered in gravy. The mashers (as they call them) were softer than angel butt and as well-seasoned as an angel diaper. The mashers were coupled with gravy creamier-than-all-others and taste similar to sitting on the bed of a truck in the middle of a field watching Independence Day fireworks. I'm not even exaggerating when I say that that combination itself is enough to start WW4 if someone were to take a bite out of your plate.

In short, I don't blame Oak Leaf (formerly Pete's BBQ) for anything. They offer glutton-free brownies. If a smokehouse ever offers glutton-free anything, then you know that they are struggling. With all these hipsters "not gentrifying" the area, local businesses have had to keep up, and we all know that if there's one thing hipsters like it's glutton-free stuff and complicating stuff from the ways it was traditionally done.

Would I go there again? Probably not, because I can just have it delivered. FPH

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Manglehorn Gets Green Treatment

By Michael Bergeron

CHARACTERS WHO'VE BEEN MARGINALIZED by a society they once embraced are a recurrent image in the movies of David Gordon Green. With a dozen films as a helmer to his credit—many of them as different from one another as their genres and budgets would suggest—his last three feature noted actors playing people reduced to the periphery of life. That would be Paul Rudd in *Prince Avalanche*, Nicolas Cage in *Joe*, and Al Pacino in *Manglehorn*—which, together, form a kind of Texas trilogy.

"Previously I had met Al [Pacino] socially," Green says to Free Press Houston in a phone interview. "A bit later I approached him with the script and said 'Remember me?'"

Green is promoting *Manglehorn*, which opened theatrically on three screens (June 19) as well as via online streaming or VOD, while also previewing his upcoming film *Our Brand is Crisis*. The two films illustrate the creative span of Green's movies. *Manglehorn* was shot as a small indie film on a relative shoestring budget in Austin. *Our Brand Is Crisis* features international locations and is produced by George Clooney and Grant Heslov's Smoke House Pictures (through Warner Brothers), and stars Sandra Bullock.

"There's a lot of homages to roles Pacino has played," says Green about *Manglehorn*. "There's the handbag that he carries and also the earring from *Serpico*. Some of the art direction in the bank scene was copied from *Dog Day Afternoon*. The same flowers like they use in *Sea of Love*. It was like a love letter to Al that we used all these Pacinoisms."

An Austin resident, Green utilized talent from the capital city, including neighbors like screenwriter Paul Logan and music from the band Explosions in the Sky.

"What's funny is that restaurants in Austin that I'm a regular at—all of a sudden I walk in one day with Al and everyone does a double take. 'Why are you with that guy?' Of course wherever we shot we drew a lot of attention," says Green. "Pacino would just sit in his chair in someone's yard and read the paper, or talk to the neighbors. He made himself right at home."

One of the locations was a boat graveyard just east of Austin that Green also used in *Joe*. "It wasn't in the script but when we were putting all of Manglehorn's stuff in a boat we thought it would be romantic to put it to sea."

Manglehorn lives a quiet life as a locksmith and pines over unrequited love. Manglehorn keeps a secret room in his house where he stores returned letters in little shelves that are like the key shelves in his store. Coming to a realization with his obsession, Manglehorn takes all the letters and photos and related ephemera and puts them in his boat that he never uses and gets rid of everything. "I worked with my regular production designer and prop master to create a world and give Pacino ideas about his character, find a world that has the right history and texture. Someone else said what if we threw the boat in the trash, and then I thought of the boat graveyard we used in Joe, it was an improvised idea," says Green.

Manglehorn lovingly tends to his cat, a fluffy white haired feline that one-day inadvertently swallows one of his keys. "We cast a cat that needed to get spayed. We learned through our technical consultant Dr. McCloud that that was a similar region to the laparotomy procedure.

"When he was explaining how the procedure would be done I kind of fell in love with his passion and love for animals so I put him in the movie and filmed the process," says Green. "In some ways it's a grotesque expression of love, it's hard to look at, but it was with the upmost technical and scientific affection that you would be able to perform something like this, and consider the animal's well being. And it's definitely something that a guy like Manglehorn has to contend with. His son wants to borrow money and Manglehorn can't loan him any because he's prioritizing his cat's health."

On raising money for indie film, Green explains that the real value for a film like "Manglehorn" is in Europe. "I get financial estimates of what we can sell the film for in Germany and France and Italy, the UK and other territories in Europe where it's going to have the majority of its theatrical life. And then make the film for 75% of that. When you make an independent film your romance has to be the red carpet of film festivals," says Green. "In Europe there is a significant theater-going public."

Green has directed films as diverse as *All the Real Girls*, *Undertow*, *Snow Angels* and *Pineapple Express*. In the recent Seth Rogen and Evan Goldberg film *This is The End*, as part of the movie's plot, a sequel to *Pineapple Express* is made ad hoc on video. "It was a very funny movie and I was on the set when they were doing it," says Green. "But the funniest part was that they called me, worried that I'd be insulted that they were making fun of it.

"It's weird. Certain people like certain films that I've done, and my work resonates with certain audiences. But I'm curious about the few folks that have stuck through all of them. Not every movie is for everybody, and I'm okay with that," says Green. "I'm the directing version of a character actor." FPH

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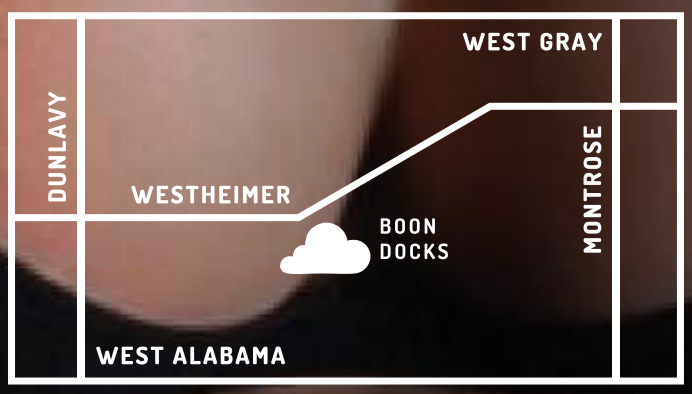

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WE HAVEN'T JOINED THE CIRCUS YET,

BUT IT WILL BE SOON

By Kmanderson

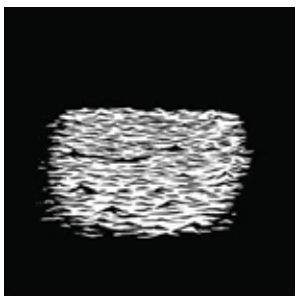
Peacers - Peacers (Drag City)
I am biased, I will say now, to the fractured rock and roll song. There are aestheticians of this particular school that prefer to make music that leaves in the scars, the mistakes of composition, perhaps intentionally, creating a song that is beautiful in its cracks and scratches. Peacers features Mike Donovan, formerly of Sic Alps (he also released an excellent solo album, Wot, in 2013), a band that beautifully crafted the mess and mayhem, the fire and ash of the rock song. Peacers, his latest project, furthers those explorations of sound. There is a traditionalism in the songs, a dedication to form and melody, there is structure—the classic Beatles or T Rex reverbed vocal, the blues-y but not blues guitar riff—informed by but not bound to. However, with Ty Segall's help (he engineered it), there are also moments of random hiss, feedback and guitar drones that enter and exit, almost like dub reggae (Leicester Bride). Each song is adventure, seeming to appear and vanish within the song's brief duration. The album benefits from angle; new favorites form as the mysteries of each song become unearthed.

Vince Staples - Summertime '06 (Def Jam)
Gangster ('sta, whatever) rap used to be scary. In its inception, its goal was to bring the reality of the street to the listener, over time that reality has become more Disney than dismal. Where once it addressed the dramas of the impoverished in an unblinking, coastal based vernacular (Houston - Geto Boys/ UGK, L.A - N.W.A/Ice Cube, Oakland - Too Short/ E40, etc.), the Tupac killing and Snoop's Doggystyle, pretty much transformed the blues of the street to the gangsta party. The domination of the South created an almost blanket sound of rap, where everyone sounded and became the same, and reality became a caricature of popular culture with crunk grills and non-hood kids with hood-isms. Vince Staples is none of that, the stories are sad—the blood is real, but the knowledge is present. His hood still has no heart and he does none of the weed song stripper song tropes. Anyone familiar with the fantastic "Hell Can Wait" EP or the equally great Shyne Coldchain I and II, know that Vince ain't fucking with y'all, not to mention his stellar runs on both Earl Sweatshirt albums and other stuff. Summertime '06 is his version of the strife of the youth; it is them robbing and shooting and why they are robbing and shooting; it is their lack of hope; it is them being beyond government programs and community "leaders." It is the hard returning to its core.

Heather Woods Broderick - Glider (Western Vinyl)
Glider is an album by Heather Woods Broderick. Broderick is of the school of allowing the song to breathe and stretch out. The fantastic "Fall Hard" is an example; it details the slow fall from love, it isn't rushed, it happens slowly, and then you lay there in a sort of emotional paralysis. "Up The Pine" is a gently strummed guitar awash with delay, a hint of rhythm gallops in the background, lightly stepping, while the vocals drizzle throughout. These are songs for drives and gazes, perfect for those times when the world outside is an ever-changing portrait; things blown down the street gain strange significance, the story on the face of person standing or sitting on a sidewalk or outside of a store. "These days spent house sitting, couch ridden in a cold light, the long silence, the dim tide, an old man breathing in the room next to mine," explains the moments that these songs soundtrack perfectly. "The Sentiments" returns to the phrase, "keep me in the dark" a paean to a lover, will you admit that this is over, that you are unhappy, or would you "keep in the dark," powerful and beautiful but spoken like if one were to say, "pass the salt please," which creates a more cryptic effect.

Jessie Jones - Jessie Jones (Burger Records)
"Sugar Coated" begins Jessie Jones' debut album. A great beginning, simple pop 60s inspired, the chorus is a rejoice, a send-off, "kiss the ground that I walk on, walk on, walk on!" However, this song is one of a collection of songs, no song relying on the same thing twice, with the exception of a consistent chorus. "Butterfly Knives" is a mellow and groovy, "Make It Spin" is raucous and resplendent, a call to arms. The album becomes something different with each song, touching on all points—gyspy jams to psych folk. "Twelve Hour Man" speaks of the CIA spying on her and friends as she shoots arrows at the sun over a soul groove. Stories of the real and surreal, triumphs of will, it is an album of empowerment—a middle finger from a dancing wrist, delightfully defiant, deliciously dissident and consummately contumacious. "La Loba" snakes along and writhes, "Nightingale" haunts in the night. The album is an adventure, it is a journey, ending with the "Mental Illness" that lays the claim "My mental illness, there's nothing wrong with it" as its only lyric. The album is magnificent, as a whole or taken in pieces, it satiates. Great job Jessie, great fucking job!

The Cairo Gang - Goes Missing (Drag City)
Much has been made of the wheel's invention, I will not beat that deceased horse, I will say that this album offers somewhat of a comfort in form, these songs sound as if they are already classics in your catalog. "Be What You Are" is of the British rock vein, "Some Other Time" is a minimal ballad, the resignation of parting, the hope for brighter future or maybe just a polite goodbye, lovely either way. The Cairo Gang specialize in songs that are hummable, easy on the ears, while their lyrics spin sordid narratives—sometimes dark, sometimes sad, many times humorous. "She Don't Want You" is rock and roll gold, it's done splendidly. This is easily one of the best albums you will hear in the period that you hear this, let's say you read this a year from when I wrote it, it will still be one of the best records you would hear; this album is not of a moment it is a moment, the word for it is timeless. FPH



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Recorded Thus Reported

By Km Anderson

Jenny Hval - Apocalypse Girl (Sacred Bones)

"Think big girl, like a king" begins Jenny Hval's latest album Apocalypse Girl, a mix of the surreal and the sullen, a view of a world through the eyes of a woman within herself in the apocalypse or possibly as the apocalypse. "The Battle Is Over" can be taken as many things, the battle to be the everywoman, the fight against the internal and external ideas of womanhood "Am I loving myself now, Am I mothering myself, Am I taking care of myself now?" only to surmise "I can see you doing the same holding on to your soft dick." These songs strike within the space of sparse soundtracks, each song presenting and unfolding, illuminating Hval's visions of the creation and absolve of the self, the exploration and examination of creating one, or the aversion to the creation. "Sabbath" is the first view of sexuality and gender from the eyes of a child, is it about a girl being with a boy, or wanting to be a boy, it is difficult to tell, but this record is meant to arouse conversation and thought. In the song she muses "It would be easy to say that it's about submission, but I don't think it's about submission; it's about holding and being held." Go here and hear this.

Meg Baird - Don't Weigh Down The Light (Drag City)

Meg Baird manages to consistently represent beauty in its many manifestations, the beauty of the unknown, the understood, the forlorn, belief and delusion. Her voice is a revelation, the most important instrument on the album, the sun rises and falls around it. The album opener is the kind of psychedelic folk rock that evokes mountains and moonlit stars, "Stars Unwinding" is an abstruse work, you can see the thin sheet of fog brimming from a cave, you are in the place, lost, following the distant torch. As many of Baird's albums have been in more of the singer/songwriter vein, beautifully picked guitar and voice, this album harkens most to her work with her former band The Espers—not a revisit, but bigger instrumentally while still within the vein of what we have come to love from Meg Baird.

Jamie XX - In Colour (Young Turks/XL)

The difference between producer albums and singer albums seems to be the establishment of aural versus vocal theme. If one listens to a rapper or singer, the words and melodies are the narrative, the beats are the setting, but in setting a tone without the reliance of lyrical narrative, the palate seems to expand since the listener is not relying on words, but more sound for story. Jamie XX understands this well, album opener "Gosh" begins as almost a grimy reggae joint only to because something brighter and more pop in its conclusion. It is the kind of album where the songs are not immediately established but rather become as they play. "Obvs" starts with tropical steel drum that soon dissolves into an almost trap pop ballad. "I Know There's Gonna Be (Good Times)" is the most clear I've ever heard Young Thug and also the most tuneful, it is masterful in its use of old soul, reggae and pop, and when Thug claims to "ride in that pussy like a stroller" it doesn't break the breezy vibe. The colors are apparent all over this one.

Cayucas - Dancing at the Blue Lagoon (Secretly Canadian)

California, in some ways, is a sound: it evokes images of beaches, breezes and the American ideas of freedom and escape, so that is what dictates (my) thoughts of the latest Cayucas album. Not that that is bad thing, Dancing at the Blue Lagoon is an easygoing tuneful indie rock album that cabannas its way along. Zach Yudin's vocals are pleasant enough to push these songs through, though I must admit it may be a little too lambent for my tastes. The summer is full of beaches and drives and margaritas and these songs compliment all those things.

Smokey - How Far Will You Go (The S&M Recordings 1973-81) (Chapter Music)

The unearthed, the lost recording always hopes to illuminate some period of music that fell through the cracks, highlighting the forgotten or barely known. Smokey has a story that incorporates an album that features members of King Crimson, The Stooges, Quiet Riot as players on an album that was deemed to be "too gay" for the time, and unabashedly so, there is a song called "Strong Love" that proclaims you need a "strong man" to make you feel right. All of this is well and good because the music is pretty good, disco-ish, weird Talking Heads-y r and b rock. "Topaz" is damn near Smokey Robinson; "Million Dollar Babies" porn funk is maybe a high point on the album. In these days, the "shock" of it may be lost, so it can be appreciated as a musical document more than some sort of mouth covering moment, and in that respect, I am with it.

The Weather Station - Loyalty (Paradise of Bachelors)

The Weather Station exist in that place of non-assuming great music. There are no more ambitions for these songs than for them to be great songs, illuminating the human experience. On "Floodplain" the song even says "I don't expect your life to be like mine, I trust you in your own mind, as I own mine." The songs come from the place of Chrsitine McVie or Steve Gunn, it is not the bombast that fosters the connection, it is the subtle wisdom. "Tapes" is a brilliant and delicate, divine and bewitching, a song about the memories the realization and interpretation of a friend or lover, the examination of based on the found or left document possibly without the intent of wanting to be exposed. FPH

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DIRTY SOUTH TOUR

DIRTY SOUTH TOUR

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JULY 5TH DENTON @ Macaroni Island
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JULY 8TH KNOXVILLE @ Pilot Light
JULY 9TH ATHENS @ High Low Lounge
JULY 10TH ATLANTA HALF DEAD FEST @ 529
JULY 11TH JACKSONVILLE @ Rain Dogs
JULY 12TH ORLANDO @ Uncle Lou's
JULY 13TH TAMPA @ The Ten9
JULY 14TH PENSACOLA @ Sluggo's
JULY 15TH ALABAMA @ Alchemy Tavern
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JULY 18TH NEW ORLEANS @ Siberia Creeperfest

A Forty Year Old Married Guy

By David Garrick
Photo Courtesy of Artist

AT FORTY YEARS OLD, Barry Laminack has made a lot of headway in just a couple of years, and has leaped from open mic comic to a feature act with his brand of more adult humor. The crazy thing is that he's done it without spending every night doing open mics or shows for zero pay. In July, Laminack will get to feature in the biggest show of his career. FPH was lucky enough to catch him between one of his three gigs to see how he's done it all.

You were born in Houston. We found out recently that my mom knows your parents from high school. How long have you been doing stand up?
I actually have two different start dates. I originally started in April of 2012, but I had to quit due to personal reasons after a couple of months; but I picked it back up in February of 2013.

You're a busy guy with a really serious regular job, a radio show on ESPN radio, and you do stand up. How do you juggle it all?
Not having kids and a really cool wife. But that schedule also means that when I do an open mic or whatever, I have to make it count.

You told me that you recently drove all the way down to San Antonio to do a spot to get in front of a booker, then you drove back to Houston the same night. Most people would call that crazy, but I call it drive. How bad do you want this?
I think that part of my drive comes from my age. I'm not in my 20's like a lot of comics, so my window of time is much smaller. The help of other comics like John Wessling, Alan Adams, Ed Blake, and Andy Huggins as well as advice from Joke Joint's Rachel Wegscheid has helped me a lot too.

What about comedy drew you to it?
When I was around seven or eight years old, I realized I could make people laugh, and that was it for me. I used to watch Bill Cosby "Himself" and then do it for my family, and the attention I got made me want to get into stand up. It just took me until the age of 38 to have enough balls to actually follow through with doing it.

Favorite comics past & present?
Well, Bill Cosby, Eddie Murphy, ironically Gallagher and George Carlin were always my favorites. I don't really watch a lot of current comics, but I listen to Mike Epps. Jim Gaffigan and Dave Landau would be who I'd say if I had to name anyone current.

Steve Harvey recently said, "I told a joke between two fictitious characters, and the next thing I knew I was having to apologize. The problem with any joke is, no matter what joke I do, it could offend anyone. But I apologized because I have a talk show." You don't do offensive jokes, but because of the radio show, do you find yourself editing your jokes to make sure you don't offend anyone?
I don't edit myself, but I'm aware of what I say. Honestly, my comedy is based around not trying to embarrass myself. Also, at this point I don't want to lose a room, so I steer clear of anything controversial.

You were recently vetted by Houston comic and road dog Slade Ham. That vouching, has gotten you a good amount of gigs since. How did all of that come about and why did Slade say that he'd do it for you?
Having Slade go to bat for me helped a lot, and it was such a big deal for me in more ways than one. Basically Rachel at Joke Joint put me on his show as a feature, and he liked me enough to vouch for me. I can't thank him enough for it.

You've become known for a more adult brand of humor that plays well to couples and people who are closer to middle-aged. Have you always done that kind of material or is it just who you are at the time, and you're just keeping it relatable to yourself?
It's just reflective of where I'm at in my life. Wessling and Blake told me early on to write what I know, and what I know is that I'm a 40 year old married guy. I'd look like an idiot if I tried to talk about anything else.

What's your definition of a successful comedy career?
For me, right now, I realize that I'm probably not going to become famous. So, in all honesty...getting to the point where I can headline shows would mean that I'm a success. That and to keep getting steady work is how I'd define a successful career in comedy, for me.

When it comes to honesty, you won't find a comic who's as honest and sincere as Barry Laminack. He went out of his way to thank pretty much anyone and everyone who's ever helped him along the way; though we had to cut them down for print space. That sincerity has earned him the respect of his peers as well as pretty much every audience he's in front of. While he gears up for headlining his own shows, you can catch him at Joke Joint Comedy Showcase on July 16th through July 18th when he features for comedy legend Gallagher. Each of the extremely limited shows has a ticket price of $20.00. FPH

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Badvice

Fuck sober, thoughtful, level-headed advice. Here's the truth: BADVICE

By Marini van Smirren
Illustration by Shelby Hohl

Disclaimer: You don't have to fucking read this if you don't like it. I know I sound like an asshole. The title states: "BADVICE" which therefore constitutes an awareness that one reading should anticipate the nature of said bad advice.

Your thoughts on Internet dating sites? Give it a go, or waste of time? I've always been pretty anti-Internet dating, but lately I've been thinking that maybe I'm being too close-minded (except for Tinder, I can't bring myself to be that materialistic). I'm pretty social and outgoing, but I'm also not good at asking dudes out nor am I coming across awesome guys I can throw game at. Advice?
Internet dating is a lazy way of meeting new people but we do everything else on the internet so why not find someone to fuck on the reg that way? Worst case scenario you have a lot of bad sex and acquire a new stalker and stalking is the new chivalry. Just remember – if you're going to tap it, wrap it. STDS ARE FOREVER.

Is there ever a point of keeping it too "Htine"?
No. But keeping "Htine" doesn't mean being a fucking idiot who promotes drinking drank, wears purple and cheers when the Rockets score. Keeping it "Htine" means hustling and coming through. If you're going to rep Clutch City, you better be someone who is worth repping it.

I woke up from a dream this morning and I think I might be a pedophile. In my dream, I was 15 years old and my family had moved into a duplex next to another family that had a 13-year-old daughter. She showed me a removable panel that we shared between our bedroom closets. She was very precocious and we did things. Am I normal?
One time in a dream I battled the oldest daughter of an alien race to save humanity. I won. Does that make me a savior? The difference between my dream and yours is you shouldn't talk about it.

I have a boss with no attention span. He's constantly on his phone, or talking over you when you have something really important to express (especially when it would benefit him). A lot of times, his personal life bleeds over into the work setting. This causes him to take out these stresses on our team. I understand he's got a lot on his plate, but it's so disheartening that the very people who toil over his grand design end up with the chaos of his misplaced disapproval. What would you do in this situation?
If your boss is getting shit done aka hustling, I would quit bitching, grow some thick skin, and not take it personally, or find a new job.

How do I get my booty call to be my bf?
You can lead a horse to water but you can't make him date you. Short of doctoring a pregnancy test, I got nothing.

I want to date a guy, but I want him to be an intersectional feminist who understands white privilege and strong dislikes the patriarchy like myself. Where can I find him?
I don't know where you can find him, but I suggest sticking a dildo on a mirror and fucking it because that's probably the closest you'll get to fucking someone like yourself.

If there is a god it's totally a woman right?
If god was a woman, everyone would be passive aggressive and say they're "fine" all the time when they're not.

What are some good games to play at party? Games for small or large parties?
For large parties, if you have an air mattress, you can play "orgy". Only an air mattress though so you don't have to look at it afterwards and remember your filth, and you don't have to flip it when it's soaked in cum.

Best type of red wine? And what do you pair with it?
Franzia paired with Devin Finch.

So I'm what your consider a black hipster. There aren't many of us in Houston but we are around. Usually hang out in EADO,Montrose,Heights at local establishment like bars, etc. Usually most people are friendly to me but there is a handle full of hipster chicks that always look at me. Are they looking cause there surprised to see me at places they like or do hipster chicks just dig black dudes?
"Hipster" is just another way to designate someone as pretentious, just like bro or douchebag. Meeting girls out at bars sucks and worrying about what others think is also that. Be as black as that joy division shirt you're wearing as you read this.

What soda will make me look the coolest?
Diet Coke.

Picking your nose is totally fulfilling. Especially when they're hard and not gooey. Am I right?
Totally satisfying. If done in the bathroom. With the door closed. And a tissue. That you throw away. Don't do that and expect anyone to share the same satisfaction as you as they're not picking it out of their own nose.

I suffer from mouth diarrhea. How can I make sure to shut the fuck up?
When you have ass diarrhea, you take Imodium through your mouth. Consider breaking down the Imodium with water, sucking the substance into a syringe, and shoving it up your ass because you're the worst kind of people. Shut the fuck up already. We're all bored. FPH

Can't Beat the Real Thing

By Harbeer Sandhu
Illustrations by Shelby Hohl

"LADIES AND GENTLEMEN," said David Byrne at the Barclays Center in Brooklyn on June 27, "America has changed!"

The former Talking Heads frontman referred to the Supreme Court decision, announced just one day prior, that legalized the right to same-sex marriage in all 50 states. The crowd rose to their feet and erupted in applause. Most everybody (at least in the stadium) was truly overjoyed.

The SCOTUS announcement was perfectly timed. Not only did it kick off Gay Pride weekend with a bang, it very quickly overshadowed the national obsession of the preceding nine days—white supremacist Dylann Roof's cold-blooded murderous rampage at Mother Emanuel AME church in Charleston, SC. But now that the Gay Pride champagne bottles are in recycling and the July 4th fireworks have been swept up, let's get back to business.

America has changed. Indeed, in this great country, dubbed "The Great Experiment" by Frenchman Alexis de Tocqueville in the early 19th century, change has been the only constant. Thirteen colonies threw off their imperialist yoke and unified under the Articles of Confederation. When that didn't work out, they reconvened and unified under the Constitution, and to get that Constitution ratified, they immediately added 10 distinct amendments—the Bill of Rights—whose very existence proves that Constitution is a flexible document, never complete, never "perfect," always subject to change.

Perhaps the biggest change underway in the US is demographic—we are in the midst of becoming a "majority minority" population. According to projections from the US Census Bureau, by 2042, racial minorities—Blacks, Hispanics, East and South Asians—taken together will account for more than 50% of the population. Among Americans under 18, that shift will likely occur by 2023—less than eight years off—and you can see this in the elementary schools.

"My parents never had any trouble picking me out of a crowd; I always stood out plainly in the sea of white," says my Indian-American friend who grew up in Alabama and is raising two half-white, half-Indian children in Houston. (Houston has already achieved a racial plurality.) "Now, when I pick up my kids from school, it's the children with two white parents who stand out in the sea of brown."

Of course, not everybody is excited about this. Reactionary segments of the population are genuinely frightened by the prospect of their shrinking cultural hegemony. They look at Dora the Explorer, Tiger Woods, Will Smith, single moms and queers asserting their right to dignity, twerking, the popularity of hip hop, the celebration of difference that is multiculturalism—not to mention a Black president—as well as increasing challenges to the 1950s ideal of a male-dominated nuclear family with a white picket fence in the suburbs (an ideal that was built upon the socialist policies of the New Deal, as well as the subjugation of women and minorities) and they see a country in decline.

"We believe that the best of America is in…small towns," said Sarah Palin in a campaign speech in 2008, "and in these wonderful little pockets of what I call the real America…This is where we find the kindness and goodness and the courage of everyday Americans."

If Palin and her ilk think "the best of America is in small towns," and 80% of the population lives in big cities, it's pretty clear that they don't have a very high opinion of this country. They are also out of touch with reality—the "Real America" hasn't been in small towns for decades.

"They fear they will soon be treated as social pariahs, the moral equivalent of segregationists," the conservative columnist David Brooks observes in his New York Times column "The Next Culture War."

According to Brooks, conservative Christians feel that their (divisive) culture is under attack, and they're probably right to feel that way. Some of these people are choosing to retreat into their own, increasingly isolated communities, while others are choosing to fight.

"You rape our women and you're taking over our country," Dylann Roof, the Charleston shooter, allegedly said in response to one of the victims who tried to talk him out of it. Roof's statement reflects sentiments not only similar to those reported by Brooks and expressed by Palin, they reveal a sense of ownership and entitlement that is too common.

"Our women," he claims, as if he owns "white women;" "our country," he asserts, as if his claim to this nation under the Constitution is greater or more legitimate than a black person whose ancestors built this country's economy and infrastructure as slaves, or someone like myself—a first generation American—or even my parents, who are immigrants and naturalized citizens whose labor and taxes and oaths of loyalty over the 43 years since they arrived have contributed to this country's shared prosperity.

My observations on Dora, Tiger Woods, and hip hop are taken partially from an essay called "The End of White America?" [note the question mark in the title], by Hua Hsu, published in 2009, soon after Obama was inaugurated, in The Atlantic. What a country! A man named Hua Hsu can publishing articles on NASCAR vs hip hop in a journal dating back to 1857.

"[W]ill a post-white America be less racially divided," Hsu asks at the outset of his essay, "or more so?"

The answer to this is not a given. We can't just sit back, passive, and assume, as MLK suggested, that "The arc of the moral universe…bends toward justice."

Dylann Roof is only a recent, extreme example of that arc going haywire. Women who fought for reproductive choice and freedom in the 60s and 70s know full well that, as we've seen in Texas recently, social "gains" can be undone—the right to abortion is increasingly under attack. Same with "affirmative action." The centrality of SLAVERY as a cause of the Civil War has been diminished by the Texas School Board in social studies textbooks, and the radical right now threatens to go after same-sex marriage with an increased fervor, rallying around Obergefell v Hodges as they did around Roe v Wade.

"We must never be lulled into a false belief," writes columnist Charles Blow in the New York Times, "that racism is dying off with older people."

To racism, I would add other forms of bigotry, as well: misogyny, homophobia, xenophobia. We can't just assume, citing some vague Enlightenment belief in inevitable Progress, that passing time will necessarily engender greater tolerance, acceptance, and celebration of differences. We must remain vigilant.

"[W]hat greater form of patriotism is there than the belief that America is not yet finished," said President Obama at the 50th anniversary of the Bloody Sunday

The Struggle to Define America

march in Selma, Alabama, "that we are strong enough to be self-critical?"

The President, in that passage, was responding to contemporary critics of those marchers 50 years ago who called them Communists, dissidents, and worse. The "love it or leave it" crowd. There is no greater expression of love for this country than to push it to live up to its highest ideals.

"Oh, what a glorious task we are given," the President went on, "to continually try to improve this great nation of ours."

To that end, I'm pleased to see so many recent efforts, such as the push to replace Andrew Jackson's face on the $20 bill with a woman's, South Carolina's decision to remove the Confederate Flag from public spaces, and Texas State Representative Garnet Coleman's effort to change the name of Dowling Street—named for a Confederate war hero, so named as an affront to the African American community whose Emancipation Park lies on Dowling Street—to Emancipation Avenue.

"This is not a trivial sideshow," David Brooks agrees. "Racism… resurfaces year after year because it's been woven by historical events into the fabric of American culture.

"That culture is transmitted through the generations by the things we honor or don't honor, by the symbols and names we celebrate and don't celebrate. If we want to reduce racism we have to elevate the symbols that signify the struggle against racism and devalue the symbols that signify its acceptance."

President Obama encouraged this in his eulogy for Pastor Clementa Pinckney, challenging those who would rather not deal with the legacies of slavery, Native American genocide, xenophobia and homophobia by saying, "For too long, we've been blind to the way past injustices continue to shape the present." The past has not all passed—the past created contemporary conditions, so fully dealing with contemporary problems requires a reckoning with the past.

David Remnick expresses a similar hope in The New Yorker, writing that "The endlessly revived 'conversation about race' shows signs of turning into something more serious—a debate about institutional racism, and about inequities in the criminal-justice system, in incarceration, in employment, in education." Let's hope so.

And so we have Dora, and RuPaul's Drag Race, and an African American President (whose birth certificate has still not satisfied all his critics), and Taco Tuesday, and even Bobby Jindal, Lousiana's conservative Republican (Catholic) Indo-American governor, even as we have jingoistic yahoos firing American flags like javelins at the publisher of this paper (see the Publisher's Note).

Along with these cultural changes and serious conversations, as well as a re-evaluation of what constitutes "America" and "The Real America." (Let's save the fact that "America" is a hemisphere, not just one nation-state, which was named by an Italian mapmpaker who just put his name on it without even ever visiting, for another day.) It's high time we started addressing the very real concept of privilege in all its forms—white privilege, male privilege, cis-gender privilege, etc.

The poet M. NourbeSe Philip has written a book-length poem called Zong!, which uses as a source text a 1783 decision from the British Supreme Court. The Zong was a slave ship that went off-course. Having limited provisions and not knowing when they'd arrive at port, the began throwing their cargo (living human beings) overboard—thinking that they would be compensated for their "loss" by their insurer, Lloyd's of London. The insurer denied the owners' claim, stating that their "cargo" had not been "lost" so much as deliberately destroyed by the owners. The court found in favor of the insurer, and that decision is, as I said, the source text for the contemporary poem.

I mention this because Lloyd's has never paid out reparations for slavery, though the whole insurance exchange's business was centered on the slave trade. Lloyd's of London still exists, and my family has purchased auto insurance through them in recent memory.

So, though my family has been in the States since only 1972 and I was born only in 1976, I, Harbeer Sandhu, as a participant in American capitalism, share some complicity in the slave trade. I cannot, as so many of my white countrymen like to do, absolve myself of this complicity by saying, "I didn't own slaves. I didn't persecute African Americans. What does slavery have to do with me?"

It has to do with all of us all alive today, because that reckoning has yet to occur, as well as the reckoning for Native American genocide. (I live on stolen land whether I like it or not, whether I, myself, stole it or not.) These issues cannot be fully put behind us until they are honestly and fully dealt with. (And to those who would fault immigrants from the "Third World" for "coming here and taking our jobs," don't forget the legacy of European Imperialism.)

To that end, I support reparations—not in the form of a "handout" or a check payable to all descendants of slaves and Native Americans, but in the form of better social services—schools, hospitals, child-care, job training, public transportation—social services that can be used not just by descendants of slaves and Native Americans, but also poor white descendants of indentured servants and laborers on whose backs this country was built. And these reparations should be framed as a reckoning in the cause of JUSTICE, an overdue repayment of a DEBT, not as an unearned "handout," as critics of reparations often attempt to smear and dismiss the idea.

Now is the moment and we are the ones that we've been waiting for. Demographics and prevailing public sentiment are both on our side. Let's not sit back and passively wait for reactionary forces to organize and undo the progressive changes since the Civil Rights Era—let's take inspiration from our elders, who sacrificed so much, and push this Great Experiment to its fullest potential.

"It was not a clash of armies, but a clash of wills," Obama said of that march across the bridge in Selma 50 years ago, "a contest to determine the true meaning of America."

That "true meaning of America" has not yet and may never be set in stone, and that adaptability is our strength. Let's just all be sure to accept our own responsibilities and do our part in ensuring that the arc of history indeed bends toward greater justice. **FPH**

The Biggest Tribe

You Never Learned About In Your Texas History Books

By Juan Mancias & Andy Torres
With an anonymous member of the Deer & Bear Societies

WERE THERE INDIANS IN TEXAS before the Spanish colonization? Before the Lipan Apache, before the Comanche, before the Kiowa, even before the Caddo, there were the Esto'k Gna living in this land that is now also known as Texas. In our Hokan language, Esto'k Gna means the Human People. Our oral tradition informs us that we have lived with these lands we call Somi Sek since time immemorial. The closest English translation of Somi Sek is this big land that we believe is alive and stands all by itself. The Spanish invaders mistakenly named us the Carrizo/Comecrudo. Carrizo (meaning Reed) for the reeds that we used to build our houses and many of our tools and weapons, Comecrudo (meaning Eats Raw) for the ways we prepared and ate our foods.

Our Ancestors developed a system of dozens of Clans, Bands and Societies based on the environment and wildlife of Somi Sek. Our Ancestors migrated through our territory in circles for various reasons—hunting, fishing, and harvesting an abundance of wild foods, the weather, the seasons, visiting relatives and conducting rituals in certain places at certain times of our calendar year. Our main living area was the Rio Grande River and its delta. In pre-European times, we traveled primarily by canoe and foot. In 1519, Spaniards stationed in Jamaica tried to invade our territory by ship through the mouth of our Rio Grande River. We swiftly put together a counter attack to defend our lands and our People that drove the invaders away from our nation with highly organized and coordinated maneuvers. More than indigenous to the North America, we are autochthonous of Somi Sek—that means that we are of this land—so we were intimately familiar with every hill, stream, river, mountain, valley, canyon and cave from the San Fernando River in Tampico to the Canadian River in the Texas Panhandle to the North.

We had good relations with every Nation in what is now known as the Southwest US. We had close relationships with the Atakapa-Karankawa, the Tonkawa, the Caddo, the Kiowa, the Waco and all of the smaller Nations of our region. We visited, intermarried, traded and danced with them on a regular basis. We defended ourselves from the Comanche when they first came onto our lands until they eventually became our allies and friends. We welcomed the Kickapoo and learned how to live in our territory together. Despite the continuing disruptions of our Life Ways, the Kickapoo probably helped maintain our Identity, as well as we helped them maintain theirs. The Massacre of our People at Devil's River near the Big Bend area verifies the connection and alliance to the early travels of the Kickapoo into Texas. We are a Plains "culture" predating many of the more well-known Plains Nations. Evidence of our Ancestors' nomadic movements within our vast range of Somi Sek lies in the rock paintings all over our lands from Northeastern Mexico, Seminole Canyon, Painted Rock, Lake Allen Henry (Justiceberg, Texas) to Adobe Walls.

By the mid 1800's, due to the increasing attacks on our People, we adapted to the crisis by becoming some of the first cowboys and heavily influencing the formation of cowboy and Tejano cultures. Our horsemanship and self-defense skills once saved a group of Anglo Texans who were being defeated by the Spanish/Mestizo Mexicans at the Battle of Mier during the Republic of the Rio Grande. We had spent three centuries since 1519 defending ourselves from continuing kidnappings and invasions from the Spanish Mexicans. The Reyes-Reyes-Leal, Mancias-Ramirez-Cavazos, Garcia-Cano- Mata, Deleon family ties made significant strides in maintaining and preserving our Life Ways into the 21st century. The same family combinations were prominent in contributions to the formation of early ranch life in South Texas. South Texas Ranching developed deeply from the villages that were maintained for centuries by Esto'k Gna. According to 90-year-old Elder Guadalupe Mancias, these Ranches were established in Tribal villages like Las Comitas, Tanque Alegre, Las Mujeres, San Isidro, La Venada, Penitas, Los Papeles, Papalote, Los Ebanos, Santa Elena, Rancho Viejo, Puerto Rico Rancho, and many others. Guadalupe Mancias speaks of the mule wagons they would ride to get from village to village. She speaks of living off the land and the use of mutates for grinding corn.

We are the original People of the Sacred Peyote Medicine, for we have lived amongst it in Somi Sek since time immemorial. In the late 1800's, our Ancestors shared our Peyote Ways with the Lipan Apache, the Comanche and the Kiowa. Our Ancestors' generosity in sharing our healing Ways was the main root of the Native American Church (NAC) that has since saved many Indian Nations around North America from complete extinction over the past century.

Our Life Ways are ancient though they are not primitive in the sense that modern society misunderstands "primitive," as being ignorant heathens with low-level thinking and understanding. Our Life Ways are simple and at the same time highly intelligent and sophisticated in everyday practical ways with deep

and grounded insights and understanding of living with a real respect for the Earth (who we know as Kamla' Kayka or Grandmother Earth) and every being that makes up our habitat—we are only a part of it. Contrary to misperceptions, we do not worship animals; we honor them to show gratitude for all that they provide to sustain us, along with our One Creator.

We continue to live our Life Ways based on our location of Somi Sek and our region's geography, weather, plant life and wildlife—which include our Ancestral Teachings, our virtues, our dialects of our Hokan language, our government, our science, our astrology, our math, our arts, our games, our foods, our hunting/fishing/harvesting, our stories, our ritual dances, songs, cleansings, healings, our multi-dimensional calendar—all of these together and more make up what we know and understand as our Identity and our Life Ways—we do not separate any of these one from another, they are connected, whole and provide us a complete Identity.

Our Identity and Life Ways have been misinterpreted by many European-Americans including Spanish-Mexicans who have written about us. Through complete lack of knowledge or arrogance, they misidentified our Clans, Societies and Bands as being separate small "Tribes." Many times, for devious reasons, we were intentionally mislabeled as other tribes such as the Lipan or the Comanche. A scholar went as far as making up a name of Coahuiltecan that grouped us with other Tribes from a whole region. The result was further confusion of our Identity. A priest even created the "Coahuiltecan" language by mixing vocabularies and grammar of languages from three different tribes. We are also mistaken as Aztec because our real name Esto'k (pronounced esh took') can sometimes sound phonetically like Aztec when pronounced quickly. For this reason, many of our own People may have thought their grandparents were saying they were Aztec since they had no previous media or literary reference to the word or a tribe called Esto'k. Worse yet, reporters, writers, scholars and people in authority positions over school curricula completely left us out of news stories or removed mentions of us out of history books.

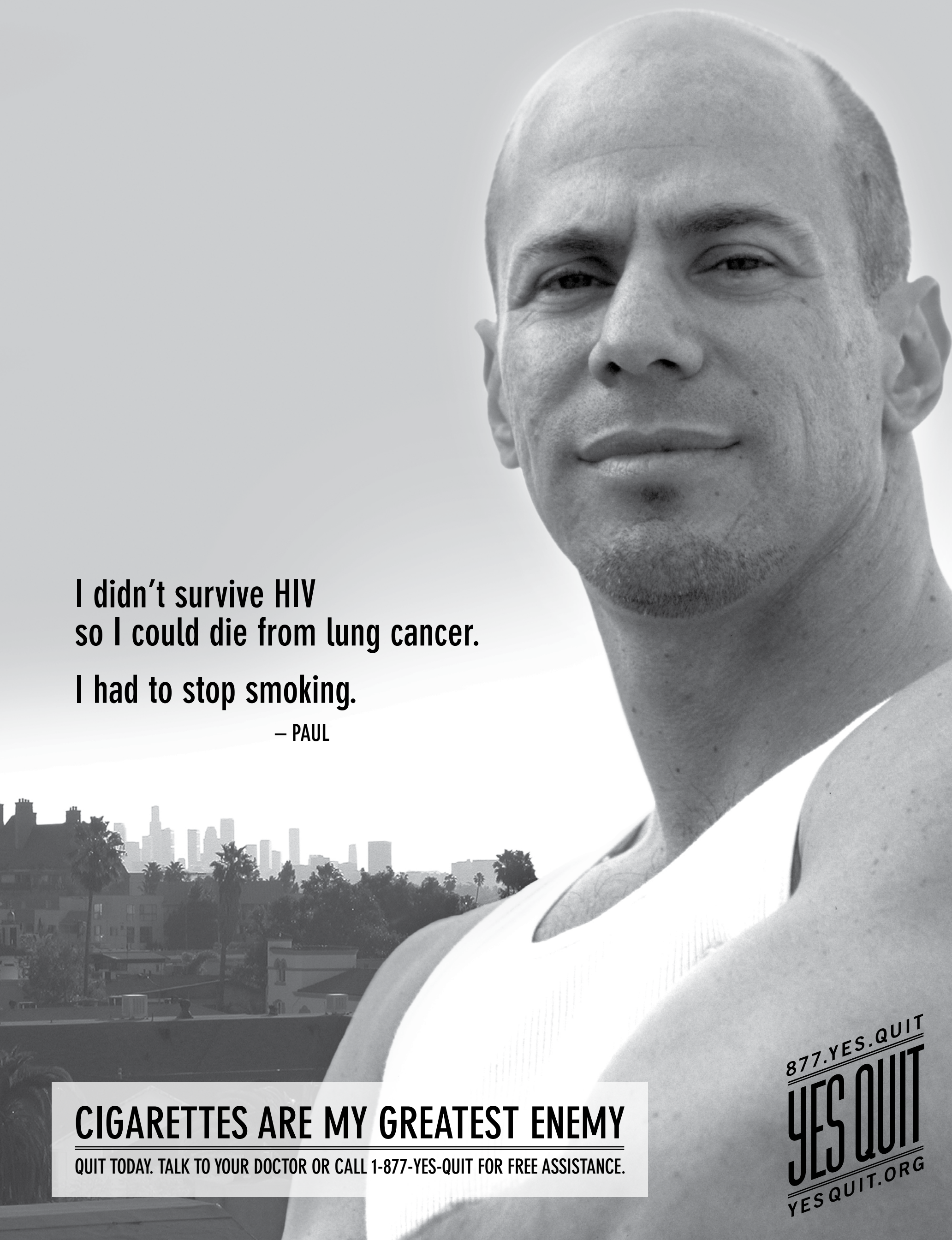
In an Oklahoma University we are documented with our name misspelled as "Kerezo" and labeled as the "Mexican Indians". In these references, the Kiowas referred to us as the Ancient Ones and the Barefoot Ones.

Today, the Andy Torres family (Tejones—Badgers), the Xavier Ayala family (Garza Clan), the Bear Society, Deer Society, Raven Society along with the Mancias-Reyes family have made strong efforts in maintaining and preserving the Identity of the Esto'k Gna for survival into the future. These families continue verifying other Bands and Clans and individuals with ties to us Hokan speakers called Carrizo/Comecrudo. The individuals have identified the Casa Chiquitas, the Ocanas, and even the Ayala of the Borrado band. Groups of our People that for decades have been considered long gone have survived the premeditated termination of the original Texans who call this land Somi Sek, the Carrizo/Comecrudo Nation of Texas, the Esto'k Gna.

Currently, some continuing struggles we face in living our Life Ways: 1) An on-going battle for us is protecting our Ancestral Burial sites from development, desecration and even from other Indians who have been making monetary profits from doing burial site "ceremonies" and re-interments—these are all extremely disrespectful. Returning our Ancestors' bodies from the Witte Museum to be re-interred with proper respect is a part of our efforts. The Esto'k Gna expect members of other tribes who live on or travel to our lands to respect our Ancestral remains, Burial Sites and our rituals—to ask properly for permission to conduct other rituals in our territory as we would do if we were in their homeland territory, that is the respectful Ways of our Peoples. Sometimes our deceased are disrespected when Powwows are held on top of burial grounds or where burial remains are being kept, like some of the major universities in Texas. We simply ask for proper respect for a land that has had our Ancestors' bodies buried all over it for many centuries. We do not want our people to die any more by another. 2) It is very important for us to financially secure the 30 acres of land where we gather for our rituals/dances so we can continue to live our Life Ways together. 3) We have long been researching and gathering documentation of our Ancestors in historical news reports, book references and government documents with our own limited personal funds and on our spare time.

If you'd like to learn more or get involved, please visit, like, and share our website http://carrizocomecrudonation.com and Facebook page https://www.facebook.com/CarrizoComecrudoTribeOfTexas.
Please also write to the Witte Museum in San Antonio to return our Ancestors' bodies and other remains for respectful re-interment, or send us artifacts, articles, stories, references, books, photos/illustrations, internet links that pertain to our history (including references to Coahuiltecan, Lipan Apache, Comanche) and groups of our People such as the Tejon, Pinto, Garza, Venado, Tortuga, Borrado and any other "tribe" that is described as living in and around the territory between the Canadian River in the Texas Panhandle south to the San Fernando River in Tampico, Mexico and from El Paso east to Matagorda Bay. FPH

Article written in collaboration between Juan Mancias, Tribal Chairman/Historian, Head Man of the Bear Clan and member of the Deer Society, Andy Torres, Tribal Historian of the Tejones along with an anonymous member of the Deer and Bear Societies.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Marriage Equality Has Arrived

Full Equality Yet to Come

By Laila Khalili
Photo by Brittanie Shey

ON NOVEMBER 7, 2004, Fran and Kim Watson shared their vows for the first time in Houston, Texas.

"We knew the State of Texas did not acknowledge our marriage, but we wanted to make a public declaration of our love in front of those we loved and trusted." This was the reality for couples all over the state of Texas and across the nation. Many state legislatures had imposed strict bans against same-sex marriage, forcing devoted couples to get married in other states.

In 2014, ten years after they made a commitment to each other, the Watsons decided to get legally married in their "second favorite city, New York." Still, their marriage wasn't supported in their home state.

When Fran heard the news of the Supreme Court decision she was sitting at home, catching up on some work. "It took a moment to really sink in." She logged onto Facebook to post an excited status, and immediately texted her wife, Kim, who was in a meeting at work.

When Kim received the text, she thought, "Oh my God, this changes everything." It must have shown on her face, because a colleague asked if everything was alright. Kim deliberated about saying anything, because she didn't want any backlash at work. Same sex marriage can no longer be denied, but nondiscrimination policies such as Houston's Equal Rights Ordinance are still under attack.

"The Supreme Court ruled on gay marriage today, and my marriage is now legal," Kim told her colleague. It turned out that her colleague has been with his partner for 15 years, so they spent the next five minutes celebrating before getting back to work.

Today, all people are granted the right to marry the one they love, regardless of their sexual orientation. This change in the law will hopefully mean that future generations of same-sex couples will never have to experience the pain and stigma that those before them had to endure.

However, while it is important for many couples to have their relationships acknowledged by the government, it means little if they can be fired from their job because their boss disagrees with their marriage.

This sentiment has been shared by countless LGBT advocacy organizations and activists: celebrate today, but don't forget that marriage is not the end all be all for LGBT equality.

"The Supreme Court decision is an epic win for freedom and family in the Lone Star State," said Christina Gorczynski, campaign director for Texas Wins, a nonprofit dedicated to LGBT equality. "It's not only wrong but bad for the state's brand that gay and transgender Texans can still be fired, evicted or kicked out of a restaurant simply for being who they are."

In 33 states, one can be evicted from their home or denied public housing because they are LGBT. Gay conversion therapy, which has been denounced by every major mental health professional group, has only been banned in 3 states. Texas has even attempted to make it a crime for transgender Texans to use public restrooms that match their gender identity.

For Fran and Kim Watson there are crucial changes that must be made in our society and to the law to truly reflect that equality has been achieved.

"Until we can get the unemployment rate down for our trans brothers and sisters, especially trans people of color, then equality is not achieved. Until there are nondiscrimination laws in place all over the country, and LGBT homelessness is no longer an issue, our work is not done. Until HIV in our community has a sharp decline, our work is not done. There is much to still be achieved, so let us not grow weary, but keep those sleeves rolled up." FPH

Kim, Fran, & their wedding officiant in Central Park.

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Fossilized in Houston

By Derek Woods

Industrial capitalism has pushed life on Earth into what scientists call a "mass extinction." Mass extinctions happen from time to time; there have been five in the Earth's history, caused by events such as asteroids striking the earth and photosynthetic bacteria filling the atmosphere with oxygen, an element that was poison to a previous generation of oxygen-hating bacteria.

THE OXYGEN CATASTROPHE happened about 2.5 billion years ago. In a way, humans are now reversing what bacteria did: filling the atmosphere with carbon instead of oxygen, eliminating other species with our byproducts. Earth had the Oxygen Catastrophe; now it has the Carbon Catastrophe. Ocean acidification is a good example of how this affects other lifeforms—as the oceans absorb carbon from the atmosphere, they become more acidic, and coral reefs die. Coral reefs are some of the most diverse ecosystems on earth; when they go, thousands of species go with them.

At present, overfishing, overhunting, deforestation and habitat fragmentation are the main drivers of the ongoing sixth extinction, with 1,000 to 10,000 times more species going extinct over the past 100 years than do normally over the course of evolutionary time. Meanwhile, climate change is happening too quickly for many animals and other creatures to adapt or evolve—climate change means that the sixth extinction will continue for a long time even if we were to fish and log and consume differently.

Biologists expect 25-40% of all species on the planet to go extinct by 2050. Extinction also impacts humans, since we depend on other species for food, and those species, in turn, depend on complex ecosystems composed of lifeforms that we don't use directly.

EXTINCT 2031
Antsingy Leaf Chameleon
Brookesia Peramata
Illustration by Daniel Anguilu

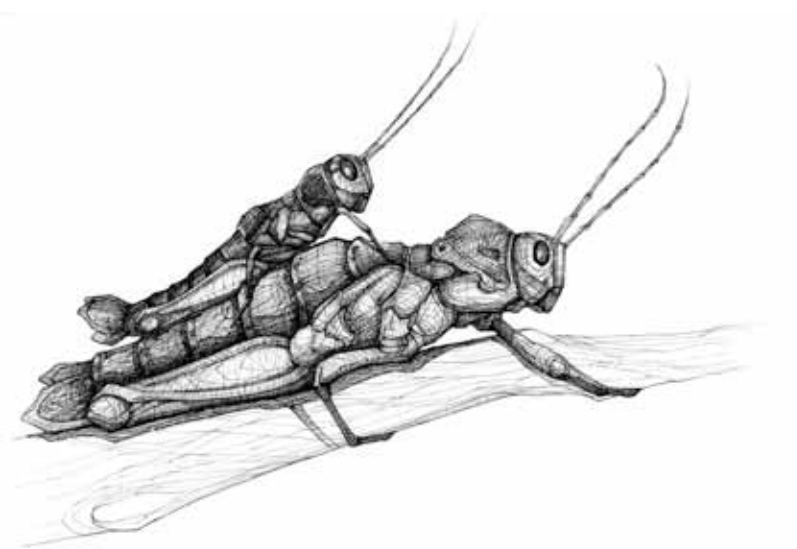
It's not just about them dying, it's about human beings suffering and even perishing as we strip the foundations from the house we're living in. Without a major shift in consciousness, consumption, and policy, 75% of all species on the planet may be gone by 2100.

Contributing to such a shift in consciousness is the goal of Fossilized in Houston, a public climate art campaign organized by Matthew Schneider-Mayerson, Lina Dib and Tony Day. In the last few months, you may have noticed stickers, posters or lawn signs depicting climate-endangered creatures on surfaces around the city. You might be in the restroom of a bar, walking through a parking structure, waiting for a bus, or driving past a suburban lawn, and suddenly a kemp's ridley sea turtle or an african wild dog or an astingy leaf chameleon stares back at you. These animals come labeled with their likely date of extinction: 2019, 2024, and 2031. With an Idea Fund grant, Fossilized is commissioning Houston artists to create images of species threatened by climate change and, with the assistance of dozens of volunteers, placing them throughout Houston as lawn signs, posters and stickers. *Fossilized* has two meanings here: many species will soon be reduced to fossils; and fossil fuels are driving this process. The link between climate change and extinction is about how humans use fossils to create fossils.

As we all know, Houston is the global megacenter of the oil and gas industry, with 5,000 energy companies calling it home. For decades, many of them have successfully lobbied state and federal governments to kill regulations, deny or minimize climate change, and generally slow the necessary transition to renewable energy. The point of Fossilized in Houston is to fill the City of Oil with images of the species that will become extinct in the Carbon Catastrophe. What was "environmental," over there and out of sight, begins to look back at us. It's as if the endangered creatures have started to insist on living in our home, like guests who overstay their welcome.

The Fossilized website suggests some ways to act in solidarity with climate-endangered animal species, but how people respond to the project's images is an open question. You might be angry or resentful at the campaign for making you depressed and nostalgic. You might be indifferent, or even get some pleasure from seeing the animals before they vanish. You might become a vegan and burn your car, or divest from big oil. These animals have been on earth for millions of years. Now perhaps you will consider the northern hairy-nosed wombat for seconds while urinating or drinking coffee. As Schneider-Mayerson puts it, these encounters are a precondition for the kinds of political and policy changes that would make a real impact: "Misinformation, routine, social norms and fossil-fuel dollars keep us from appreciating and internalizing the changes that are underway. Intellectual awareness is fleeting, it's not enough. By tapping the city's wealth of talented artists to remind Houstonians of the consequences of the actions of some of Houston's largest corporations, we're hoping to spark an *emotional awareness* of the ongoing mass extinction as well as the profoundly unjust human consequences of climate change."

Fossilized in Houston is a machine for generating these encounters by peppering the city with climate-endangered species. The parts of this machine are local artists, images, the web, snail mail, and friendship. In theory, the machine could run indefinitely, on relatively small amounts of energy. And you can be part of it, too—if you put in an order (fossilizedhouston.com), images of soon-to-be extinct animals will arrive at your house. A BOG TURTLE or CERULEAN PARADISE FLYCATCHER might be an eye-pleasing way to send the message that you care as much about the Carbon Catastrophe as those oxygen-hating bacteria did about the Oxygen Catastrophe of 2,500,000,000 BC. **FPH**

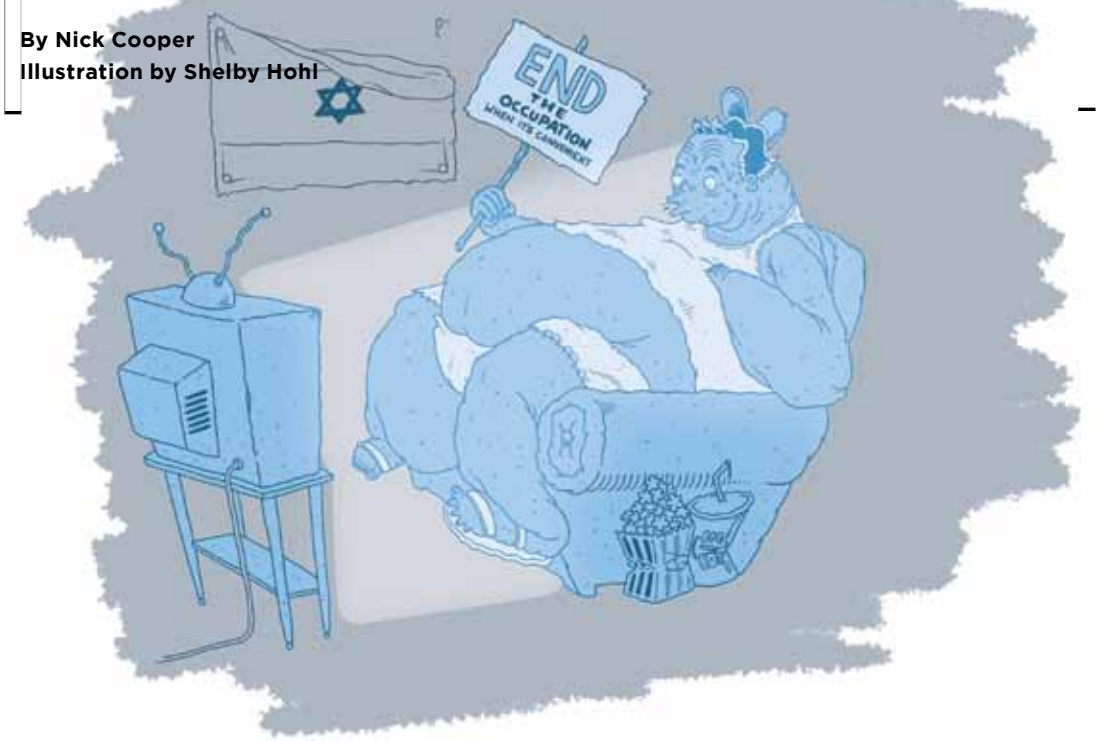


EXTINCT 2052
Iberian Lynx *(top)*
Lynx Paradinus
Illustration by Elaine Bradford

EXTINCT 2018
Palma Stick Grasshopper *(bottom)*
Acrostira Euphorbiae
Illustration by Josh Bernstein

Liberal Zionists vs BDS

By Nick Cooper
Illustration by Shelby Hohl



THE INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENT for Boycotts, Divestment, and Sanctions on Israel (BDS) is causing quite a stir in its tenth year. Using tactics learned from the struggle against South African apartheid, BDS demands an end to the Occupation, the right of return of Palestinians outside of Israel, and full equality for Palestinian citizens of Israel.

Conservative Americans and Israelis are trying to silence BDS. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has launched a war against it. The Israeli Justice Ministry is preparing to launch international lawsuits against those who support it. American billionaire Sheldon Adelson has convened a secret summit against it. The US Congress is working on a bill to criminalize it.

Liberals are also joining the battle against BDS. The editors of the liberal Jewish US newspaper, The Forward, suggest that the left should join together to defeat BDS. The "pro-Israel, pro-peace" political action committee, J-Street, says it merely "opposes the Israeli occupation of Palestine, but it "strongly opposes" BDS. The editors of Israel's liberal newspaper, Haaretz, often express opposition to BDS. Even the outspoken critic of Israel, Norman Finkelstein, has criticized BDS as a cult.

In Israel and the US, the huge Jewish right-wing is made up of racist white Jewish-supremacists who are proud colonizers. On the far left, there is a much smaller group that seeks equal rights for Palestinians and supports movements like BDS. Between these extremes is a substantial "liberal Zionist" constituency that supposedly wants peace and an end to Occupation, but doesn't really want to rock the boat.

Zionists of all stripes want Israel to be Jewish-controlled, but liberal Zionists want that control to be somehow benevolent. Right-wing Zionists don't care about benevolence, and don't pretend, like liberals do, that they are willing to give up much of anything for peace or justice. Liberal Zionists, like liberal Americans, don't want their country bombing or occupying anyone, but they really have no interest in giving up any privileges to achieve that.

In recent years, Netanyahu's brutal attacks and racist campaign rhetoric have eroded support for this middle ground. Amidst a backdrop of images of Israel's ugly campaign of ethnic cleansing, their dream of a peaceful, democratic, yet still racially-defined state, is becoming increasingly difficult for anyone to visualize.

Liberals Zionists supposedly agree on one of the BDS demands: an end to Occupation. BDS's other two demands—full equality for Palestinian citizens of Israel and especially Palestinian right of return—make the liberals nervous. Those who aren't ok with having the Palestinians who were kicked out of their homes (and their descendants) move home, are not willing to make the fundamental changes needed to achieve justice.

Liberal Zionists must understand that the question of Israeli 'democracy' hinges on these other two demands, but they also fear an Israel in which white-looking Jews don't have extra special rights and access. The dream of a third option appeals to those who want to end the Occupation without giving up any of their privileges. However, for BDS supporters, an end to the Occupation that still includes legal inequality means little more than a nicer-looking apartheid.

To bring pressure on Israel, BDS organizes non-violent economic, academic, government, and cultural campaigns. If liberals agree with BDS about a need to end the Occupation through non-violent tactics, yet they reject BDS tactics, what tactics are left—just voting? Liberals characterize boycotts and confrontational tactics as too 'alienating,' and resent their radical counterparts for not adopting more polite and obedient tactics (as if those ever work). So, liberals find themselves confronting BDS on behalf of the racist status quo. They are reminiscent of liberals and churches in the 60s that claimed to oppose racial injustice, but had nothing but criticism for MLK's movement.

J-Street lobbies politicians but, so far, has had little effect. US and Israeli politicians almost unanimously support Occupation. There are differences between conservative and centrist politicians in the US and Israel on the issue of *new* settlements, but when it comes to dismantling the *existing* settlements and ending the Occupation, no mainstream politicians are even talking about that.

The main pillar of the Zionist left has long been the 'two-state solution.' Progressive folks get yelled at if they criticize or question the two-state solution, despite the fact that nothing is being done by either side to work towards such a solution. At some point, and for some people, perhaps, the 'two-state solution' meant two states equal and free of each other's control. If so, the term was later co-opted. Now it signifies an illegally nuclear-armed Israel on the one side, and on the other, a bunch of non-contiguous enclaves (read "bantustans") called Palestine with massive Israeli military checkpoints between them. Israel would control the airspace and borders of this Palestine, which would be demilitarized, and apparently, would have to affirm that Israel has the right to exist as a Jewish state. Those who push for this type of two-state solution are akin to various groups throughout the twentieth century who supported apartheid, separate and unequal segregation, or the transfer of indigenous onto reservations.

The Zionist left and right are united in their deep dislike of BDS. For them, BDS is even more exasperating than Hamas rockets, because it's harder to play the victim when all you're up against is a nonviolent human rights movement. Liberal Zionists seem more concerned with defeating BDS than defeating the Occupation itself. FPH

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The Curious Case of Laura Kipnis

By Jacob Santillan
Illustration by Blake Jones

Were I a betting man, the smart money would be on the notion that you, dear reader, have at some point in your life, contributed to the countless flame wars, Facebook fights, and Twitter spats which are a staple of life on the Internet. Maybe you do it to sharpen your mind?

MAYBE YOU DO IT to prepare for your obnoxious conservative uncle who's had a few beers too many at Thanksgiving dinner and regurgitates the latest line from Fox News while you hope he doesn't regurgitate dinner. Maybe you enjoy being contrarian for it's own sake? In any case, the struggle is real.

I am certainly no stranger to discord and controversy. I frequently court them, even, but one cardinal rule I have for debate is "attack the argument, not the person," but I do make a few exceptions. For example, a "family values" politician or preacher who thunders about sexual propriety—who parades his family before the cameras like show horses while building a career out of making life more dangerous and miserable for LGBT folks—who then gets caught on his knees in an airport men's room—makes himself fair game. Other than that, a typical moment of victory for me is when someone else goes ad hominem, when an opponent attacks the person, not the argument. That's the point where someone admits they no longer have any valid counter-argument...which brings me to the curious case of Professor Laura Kipnis.

Kipnis is a feminist professor at Northwestern university who wrote an article for the Chronicle of Higher Education, entitled "Sexual Paranoia has Struck Academe," protesting what she saw as her school's excessive regulation of sexual conduct—specifically the prohibition of university professors dating or sleeping with their own students. This, predictably, angered campus moralizers who so frequently behave like the intellectual and emotional equivalent of human veal at the slightest hint of disagreement, so, naturally, they petitioned the school administration to issue official condemnations of Professor Kipnis, underscoring their displeasure by carrying mattresses and pillows during various protest marches in reference to the infamous "mattress girl" case of Columbia University.

As a general rule. I don't think it's appropriate for college professors to sleep with their own students. For example, if you're a political science professor, you shouldn't date or go to bed with a political science major. There's a conflict of interest which I think is professionally inappropriate. Excluding that, assuming that they're consenting adults, I don't have any objections to professors sating or sleeping with students who will never cross paths academically. In short, I have no interest in defending Kipnis's original article.

Defending her became a moral imperative for me when two female grad students filed Title IX complaints against her, alleging that the article, and a tweet she'd posted related to it, amounted to retaliation against the complainants. How they amounted to retaliation is my guess as much as it still is Kipnis's.

For those of you wondering what Title IX is, it's a historic piece of legislation enacted in 1972 to combat gender discrimination, specifically in institutes of education which receive federal funds. This applies to virtually all universities in the U.S., as federally-backed student loans count as receipt of federal funds. With total student debt load having ballooned to roughly $1.3 trillion, it's easy to see why.

Title IX is most commonly thought of as applied to university athletics programs whereby universities must provide equal opportunities for men and women to participate in various athletics programs, however it applies to all educational activities for such universities. It also demands that such universities implement and execute policies to combat sexual harassment and assault. In this case, the two female grad students decided to use Title IX against Prof. Kipnis because she wrote an article they didn't like.

"It's the harbinger of what we're afraid is a new era of colleges deciding that they're going to launch Title IX investigations whenever anybody says something that be construed as sexually discriminatory regardless of the situation," says attorney Robert Shibley, Executive Director of the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, also known as FIRE. "Title IX has

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never been interpreted to cover op-eds in national newspapers like the Chronicle of Higher Education; to the extent that it's being used to regulate speech in a free press, that's really problematic."

FIRE's stated mission is to protect the rights of "freedom of speech, legal equality, due process, religious liberty, and sanctity of conscience" on university campuses. I suspect that the terms "religious liberty" and "sanctity of conscience" may rub you the wrong way because it's frequently the language of social conservatives. Hold that thought because it was a red flag to me too at first. More on that later.

That Kipnis couldn't publish an opinion publicly without someone subjecting her to a Title IX inquiry is a horrific sign of the state of debate in American universities. Don't want to be bothered to counter speech with speech? Just file a Title IX complaint to try to intimidate and silence people.

Some downplay the significance of these Title IX complaints by saying they will certainly be dismissed in court, but "in situations like this, the process becomes the punishment," says Shibley. "When you don't have a procedure for eliminating frivolous complaints at the very beginning of the process, [you end up with] a professor who has been sidetracked for 72 days worrying whether or not she's going to be proclaimed as someone is engaged in discrimination for simply writing an article for a newspaper. That in itself has an extremely noticeable chilling effect on expression on and off campus, particularly on Northwestern's campus where the other professors would say, 'You know what, I'd like to weigh in on this issue but is it really worth two or three months of hassle even if I'm going to be cleared at the end of it?'"

Fortunately, the Title IX charges were dismissed—albeit after a 72 day ordeal under conditions of which "Kangaroo court" would come to mind for good reason. That nothing came of the Title IX complaint against Kipnis isn't the point either. That anyone thought it was even remotely appropriate to use Title IX inquiries as a tool of intimidation or retaliation against people for voicing opinions they don't like is a development that's highly alarming to me. It's alarming because if there is one place in this country where the unmentionable can and should be mentioned, that tough ideas should be introduced and challenged, it is the American university.

Objections anticipated

Remember when I said that I suspect that you might be suspicious of FIRE's defense of "religious liberty" and "sanctity of conscience" because it's frequently the language of social conservatives? I originally mistook FIRE as a conservative organization for this very reason. They frequently manifest as the language of draconian abortion restrictions, discrimination against LGBT folks, and "conscience clauses" which allow pharmacy techs to refuse to dispense birth control, so I understand the raised eyebrow.

They are in fact highly non-partisan and very sincere about that fact. While the organization does count conservatives as its members, FIRE's President, Greg Lukianoff, is actually a liberal Democrat. And while FIRE was not directly involved in Prof. Kipnis's case, they have come to the defense for the rights of people from across the political spectrum on American universities. This is important because Prof. Kipnis's ordeal is not simply a Left/Right issue.

"Most academics I know—this includes feminists, progressives, minorities, and those who identify as gay or queer—now live in fear of some classroom incident spiraling into professional disaster. After the essay appeared, I was deluged with emails from professors applauding what I'd written because they were too frightened to say such things publicly themselves. My inbox became a clearinghouse for reports about student accusations and sensitivities, and the collective terror of sparking them, especially when it comes to the dreaded subject of trigger warnings, since pretty much anything might be a 'trigger' to someone, given the new climate of emotional peril on campuses," says Kipnis in her article about her ordeal "My Title IX Inquisition". Granted, this is in her own words, so take it with a grain of salt, if you like.

Don't be a "stepford student"—do your own thinking

While Kipnis is one example out of many, FIRE has an extensive documentation of cases which resemble these. The concept of free speech is often wrongly conflated with the First Amendment, though they are related. This leaves the door open to pro-censorship weasel arguments which state in one way or another that "it's only censorship when the government does it." The First Amendment applies to the government yes, but free speech is a universal value.

When it comes to the defense of free speech rights I have a personal "viewpoint neutrality" whereby I'll defend, with very few exceptions, not the content of someone's speech, but their right to it. I don't agree with Prof. Kipnis's article protesting Northwestern University's ban on faculty dating their own students; I think it's quite reasonable. I do defend her right to pen that article. The fact that students thought they should use Title IX to retaliate against her for it invariably reminds me of the experiences of Brendan O'Neil, Editor at Spiked, who describes the rise of the "Stepford Student", himself a victim of them when an abortion debate at which he was supposed to present the pro-choice argument was shut down simply because both debaters were men.

Stepford Students are, as he puts it, the "students [who] are far more interested in shutting debate down than opening it up." In the UK, they demand the "right to be comfortable," to never be confronted with any challenging idea or uncomfortable opinion. Here in the US, Stepford Students bang on about the need for "emotional safety." In both countries, Stepford Students hide behind risible buzzwords such as "microaggressions," "safe spaces," and "trigger warnings" to install such petty tyrannies which encourage the kind of climate which spawned the alarming notion that it's perfectly acceptable to use Title IX against someone because someone else doesn't like or agree with an article.

"The increased calls for sensitivity-based censorship represent the dark side of what are otherwise several positive developments for human civilization...I believe that we are not passing through some temporary phase in which an out-of-touch and hypersensitive elite attempts—and often fails—to impose its speech-restrictive norms on society. It's worse than that: people all over the globe are coming to expect emotional and intellectual comfort as though it were a right. This is precisely what you would expect when you train a generation to believe that they have a right not to be offended. Eventually, they stop demanding freedom of speech and start demanding freedom from speech," writes FIRE's Greg Lukianoff in his essay "Freedom From Speech."

Indeed, the kind of mindset behind the Title IX complainants, and those like them, demands precisely that—freedom from speech. It's incredibly infantilizing because it never applies only to them; they essentially signal that they should get to dictate what you get, or don't get to see, read, and hear for yourself. If someone personally wishes to deny themselves the opportunities exposure to new ideas may bring, they can be my guest. I trust that you, dear reader, are better and stronger than that, both mentally and emotionally. **FPH**

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It's Not Over

Marriage Equality Does Not Equal Full Equality

Reviewed by Paul Mullan

TEXAS OFFICIALDOM CURRENTLY INSTALLED in Austin, under Governor Greg Abbott and Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick, is more extreme-right than usual. The recent legislative session saw a storm of proposed bills against lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people. In the face of grassroots opposition, those bills failed. Locally, conservatives are organizing to overturn the Houston Equal Rights Ordinance (HERO), which bans discrimination based on sexuality and gender identity, among other things. Their effort to force the third anti-LGBT ballot referendum in as many decades is winding through the courts. The Supreme Court's recent rulings on gay marriage will only galvanize this attempt at a reactionary putsch.

Given this background, Michelangelo Signorile's new book It's Not Over: Getting Beyond Tolerance, Defeating Homophobia, and Winning True Equality is particularly timely. The best-selling author hosts his own show on SiriusXM Progress; is Editor-at-large of Huffington Post Gay Voices; and is a former activist with ACT UP, the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power.

The 1969 rebellion against police brutality at the Stonewall Inn in New York City has, rightly or wrongly, long been considered the founding moment of the contemporary LGBT movement. There, the basic concept has been that LGBT people should come out of the closet: to family, friends, co-workers, neighbors, and others. The goal of this incremental, one-on-one dialogue is to change minds and eliminate prejudice.

This idea has been powerful: the LGBT struggle has perhaps been the most effective on the US left post-1968. However, this idea does not, by any stretch, do everything that it was once expected to do. Signorile lays out a sobering assessment of the situation now.

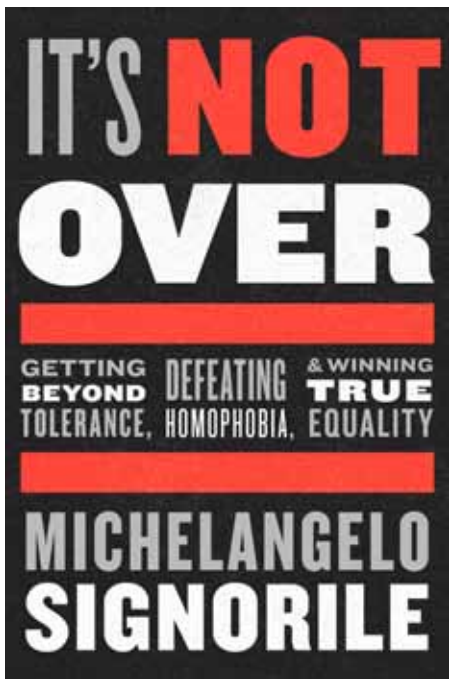
Shifting mass culture and its messages has been one focus for years. There, advances are more limited than commonly assumed, as Signorile highlights.

GLAAD reported in 2014 that out of 102 studio films, only 17 had LGBT characters. Most were minor roles, on screen for mere minutes or seconds, and often "'outright defamatory'."

As another example, major studios refused to finance Steven Soderbergh's small-budget Liberace biopic, Behind the Candelabra. They told the esteemed director that the material was "'too gay'." HBO eventually backed the film, which openly depicted gay intimacy and refused to "cover" the fact that Liberace was a super-queen.

"Covering," a term from legal theorist Kenji Yoshino, is distinguished from both "passing," or hiding in the closet; and "conversion," or the attempt to become straight. Instead, it is the downplaying of difference and the emphasizing of sameness, vis-à-vis wider society. (Yoshino is increasingly a reference point for big rethinks of the state of the LGBT communities.)

NFL defensive end Michael Sam, for instance, refused to "cover" his sexuality, and kissed his male partner on-air after learning of his 2014 selection by the St. Louis Rams. According to a subsequent HuffPost / YouGov poll, 60% of respondents approved of teams signing openly gay players. Yet only 36% said it was appropriate for ESPN to broadcast Sam's smooch. When someone's lived experience remains "private," their identity can seem abstract. When those differences are put into practice in the public sphere, that identity becomes more concrete and challenging for others.



LGBT communities' nominally radical elements have longstanding anti-assimilationist perspectives, such as a disavowal of the fight for marriage rights. These perspectives also underscore LGBT difference, rather than sameness, and initially sound similar to the book's rejection of "covering." Signorile, though, wants to encourage further mobilization for such rights—and the entire agenda beyond that. Such an agenda is, after all, necessary because of the ongoing, differential political status of LGBT people.

Signorile further details the situation. 30%-40% of LGBT youth, according to the Suicide Prevention Resource Center in 2008, have attempted to take their own lives. Those numbers have not substantially dropped since the late 1980s. One factor here is that eight states, such as Arizona, have "don't say gay" laws. These strictly limit what educators can teach about homosexuality and are an effort to keep LGBT lives invisible and voices silent.

In a landmark 2012 case, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) determined that the 1964 Civil Rights Act's prohibition of sex discrimination applies to transgender people. Nonetheless, at least 32 states still have no laws specifically barring discrimination against transgender people in the workplace, housing, public accommodations, or credit. A full 29 states have no laws specifically barring discrimination, based on sexual orientation, in those spheres or employment. No such federal law exists either.

This problem has hardly disappeared. The Williams Institute at UCLA found in 2011 that "78% of transgender respondents reported harassment or mistreatment at work because of their gender identity." Per Pew Research in 2013, 21% of LGBT workers have been "treated unfairly by an employer in hiring, pay, or promotions."

Given these and other enduring problems, Signorile's core argument is against what he calls "victory blindness," the conviction that the LGBT struggle is, somehow, predestined to win the war. Again, the recent Supreme Court rulings threaten to galvanize reactionary forces, as Roe v. Wade serves as a rallying call to anti-choice movements.

The book emphasizes events following the November 2008 passage of Proposition 8 in California, which banned same-sex marriage there. Nationally, that spurred the youthful "equality movement" which successfully pushed to resolve questions stuck on the political agenda since the mid-1990s. Those included passage of a federal, LGBT-inclusive hate crimes act in 2009; Congressional repeal of the US military's antigay Don't Ask, Don't Tell (DADT) policy in 2010; and the legalization of same-sex marriage in a growing number of states. Additionally, the US Supreme Court decided in 2013 that key provisions of the federal Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) were unconstitutional.

In this context, victory blindness is somewhat understandable. However, victory blindness is hardly limited to the recent past and is an abiding characteristic of the LGBT struggles, one that does not even strongly correlate to real, on-the-ground political successes.

THE ANTLERS

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So-called "post-gay" thinkers have persistently suggested that LGBT identity and community are increasingly irrelevant. Two examples are queer critic Mark Simpson's Anti-Gay, from 1996; and Andrew Sullivan's essay "The End of Gay Culture," from 2005. Retrospectively, this sense of an "ending" seems misguided. In the mid-1990s, annual AIDS deaths hovered at approximately 40,000. Lifesaving drug therapies—protease inhibitors—had only begun to reduce those numbers. Moreover, from 2004-2008, voters approved constitutional bans of same-sex marriage in 26 states. This right-wing wave receded only with the equality movement post-2008, although another swell of anti-LGBT politics now seems on the horizon.

Further, David M. Halperin's (excellent) 2012 book How To Be Gay details the monotonous declarations that social progress has moved gay men in particular beyond pre-Stonewall subcultures of gender inversion or femininity. This analogous sense of an "ending" appears well-prior to the 1990s: from the philosopher Michel Foucault, in 1978; the writer Edmund White, in 1969 itself; and others.

Victory blindness is dangerous. Signorile contends: "We need only look to other movements to see how gains have been rolled back in ways that would have seemed unimaginable forty years ago."

Achievements of the post-1960s women's struggle once seemed secure. Many women, by the 1990s, demobilized politically and ultimately rejected the term "feminism." A powerful and unhampered backlash resulted. Today, abortion rights, contraception, and gender equality overall are mortally endangered—in Texas, particularly, since 2013.

Achievements of the black civil rights and black liberation struggles also once seemed secure. However, that major political upsurge arguably ended by the 1970s, with nothing equivalent afterwards—at least until this year. That those gains are threatened is demonstrated by the seemingly unending wave of police brutality and police killings. Only with Black Lives Matter and black community uprisings in Ferguson, Missouri and Baltimore has a potent response, analogous to the 1960s, arisen.

Given these cautionary lessons, Signorile concludes: "[W]e'll likely have to defend hard-fought wins, push for further gains, beat back our enemies, and battle bias and violence for generations to come." This is a novel and striking departure from widespread notions that history inevitably progresses in the direction of LGBT equality.

Right-wing activist Frank Schubert, in a candid conversation with Signorile at the 2014 Values Voter Summit, indicated that future anti-LGBT efforts would be modeled on the anti-abortion movement. They want to find issues analogous to "partial-birth abortions," in an attempt to incrementally build public support. So-called "religious freedom" statutes are part of this new game plan.

The book gestures towards two, distinct explanations for these current conditions.

Overt bias is disappearing and being replaced by more hidden or disguised forms, Signorile contends in the first explanation. In 2013 Pew Research polling that posed questions overtly about LGBT issues, 55% responded with a favorable "overall opinion" of gay men, versus 37% in 2003. 58% responded with a similar, positive opinion of lesbians, versus 39% a decade prior. However, a deeper study by Project Implicit, which Signorile examines, suggests actual, positive shifts in attitudes are much less dramatic.

In the second explanation, Signorile begins by noting that white men ages 18-29 favored Republican Party candidate Mitt Romney by thirteen points in the 2012 presidential elections; and white women in that age range, by one point. Romney supported a US constitutional amendment barring same-sex marriage. However, around the same time, in 2014, marriage rights were supported by 61% of young Republicans. Assuming, reasonably, that most young GOPers are white people, the positive, personal beliefs they weakly hold on marriage did not translate into strong action around the issue.

The degree to which minds have been genuinely changed remains central in the first explanation. That is consistent with the LGBT movement's dominant, 45-year strategy—and its continuance.

The discrepancy between individual belief and political action is central in the second explanation. The latter does not automatically follow the former. The deepening corrosion of the nominally democratic US system is one aspect of this discrepancy. That changing minds would ultimately translate into effective votes—for candidates, in ballot referendums, etc.—was long assumed in LGBT political strategy. This is questionable today with sustained attacks—disproportionately impacting black people, Latinos, and the working class—on voter registration processes.

Moreover, key, controversial policies of this century were not at all deterred by majority opposition. The murderous US occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan are but two examples. Growing extreme-right influence in official, legislative politics, in Texas and elsewhere, is another. Powerful, vested interests are increasingly able to usurp majority sentiments under our current political system.

While less than 10% of the US population as a whole is LGBT, a 1989 study on youth suicide from the Department of Health and Human Services, reported that 25% of homeless youth were LGBT. Today, as Signorile notes, that number has not gone down and is as high as 40%. This wildly disproportionate representation has persisted for at least a quarter-century, even as overall social tolerance and acceptance has grown.

This disproportionality, thus, seems more impersonal or structural in nature, and not reducible to bad ideas like prejudice. This structural type of problem, discussed less by Signorile, hints at the possible importance of other factors, including the economy, unemployment, lack of affordable housing, or access to higher education.

Signorile is (legitimately) suspicious of presumed Democratic Party presidential nominee for 2016, Hillary Clinton. After all, the equality movement had to force even the Obama administration to act on basic rights measures. He is also suspicious of inside-the-beltway LGBT groups already backing Clinton, such as the Human Rights Campaign. A new and militant grassroots phase of the LGBT struggle is needed, per the book: "protesting, practicing civil disobedience … and, perhaps, planning right now for another march on Washington."

The battle must continue, even assuming the post-1969 framework of changing minds. Fresh approaches are required, too, as the disjunction between individual beliefs and political action shows. Structural matters are becoming central, as well. The LGBT movement must consider questions long outside its purview, such as voting rights, economics, and housing. The new movement for which Signorile is calling will have to address all of these conditions. **FPH**

Paul Mullan (p_m_mullan@yahoo.com) is an activist and writer in Houston, Texas. His work has appeared in Free Press Houston, Red Wedge, The Great God Pan is Dead, Marx and Philosophy Review of Books, and elsewhere.

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