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FREE SPEECH UNDER ASSAULT

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Free speech is the first
line of defense
[original title]

by Street Roots staff

It shouldn't come as any surprise that just when the American press begins to show a little backbone in it's reporting on the Bush administration, the administration fires back with the big guns. This April, in an attempt to better control the message, the administration announced it is suppressing the messenger. The FBI and the Justice Department are investigating reporters who have learned the truth — despite ever-increasing classified documents — and reported it to the American citizenry.

It was the unveiling of the CIA's secret prisons and the warrantless spying on U.S. citizens on American soil that sent the already defensive administration into retaliation, including threats from the Justice Department that reporters could be charged under espionage laws. Editors and journalism experts are calling this the biggest crackdown on the free press since the Nixon administration and the age of his covert "plumbers."

Yeah, we get it, we're in a perpetual war against terrorism. Loose lips sink ships and national security is a priority for everyone, from the first to the fourth estate. But free speech, whistle blowing and a transparent democracy is the birthright of every citizen of this country. It's what we're fighting for in the first place. With harrasment and threats of criminal charges, this administration seeks to stifle the investigative duties of reporters and the media, and lead their larger corporate concerns to err toward the conservative path of least

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End of an Era:

The closing of Scotland's Homeless Hostels
Street News Service www.streetnewsservice.org

by Peter John Meiklem
The Big Issue in Scotland

As Scotland counts down to 2012, when the Scottish Executive [devolved government] has pledged to end homelessness, big changes are taking place. In Glasgow, huge hostels are being closed. Peter John Meiklem asks what this means for residents

For the last 30 years this has been a home for men who call themselves homeless: a tiny window, a busted bed and a room so small you can touch both of the walls at the same time. There is no bathroom, no kitchen and no visitors allowed in through the front door. One resident, Richard McGinty, who's been living here for the last year and half, says the place is like a prison.

But not for much longer. The Peter McCann hostel, built by the city council in the 1970s to shelter single homeless men, will shut its doors for the last time at the end of July. The place has been winding down since April, of the 248 people the hostel was designed to accommodate there are only 60 men left.

By the end of July these men will either living in their own flats or in smaller units designed for their specific needs. At least, that's the plan. Since 2000 the Glasgow Homelessness Partnership - made up of the council, Scottish Executive and voluntary sector groups - has been decommissioning Glasgow's large-scale hostels.

Three of the six are now closed. Peter McCann and James Duncan house will soon follow. Ten years ago more than 2,000 men would use the hostels every night. Now that figure is down to 267 and it is getting smaller by the day. Only Inglefield, a hostel for women which currently has 68 residents, will remain open in the future.

Anybody, no matter what their background, will show signs of being institutionalised after six months, explains Moira Bayne, a nervous looking hostel closure co-ordinator. "This is a terrible environment to live in and nobody would want to be here through choice," she adds.

"There's no privacy, there's no proper facilities and the place completely deskills people - you can't make yourself as much as a slice of toast. The resident's lives are restricted to the hostel opening hours, they eat what's in the canteen.

"It's hard to make this a safe environment. It's not been possible to let visitors into the hostel so straight away people are disengaged from their families and their social skills. Their ability to function in a regular way disappears. It's impossible to be normal."

And that's why the homelessness partnership has decided to shut them down. The Executive have promised everyone the legal right to a home by 2012 and tiny boxrooms in communal hostels - where drink, drugs and violence are often rife - is not what they had in mind. They have provided more than £12 million in order to try and make their promise happen.

That, in itself, is a victory for those who work with homeless people. For Robert Aldridge, director of the Scottish Council for Single Homeless, the closures signify a wider change in attitude; for him, they mean that people who've lost their home need no longer be treated as a mass of indistinguishable people who are to be managed as best as possible - but as individuals who need differing amounts of help and support to get on with their lives.

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JOURNEY FOR JUSTICE 2006

by Sandy Perry
Community Homeless
Alliance Ministry (CHAM)

On the evening of April 20, CHAM members returned from an exhilarating Journey for Justice through the California Central Valley. When we embarked on this caravan, we knew that the Valley was one of the poorest areas in the state and the entire nation. We expected, and we found, poverty, homelessness, denial of medical care, and horrendous abuse by law enforcement and immigration agencies. But we also found, in every town, a strong outpouring of hospitality and love. Above all, everywhere we found community resistance to injustice, growing awareness, and powerful spiritual leaders.

The Journey for Justice was co-sponsored by CHAM, Merced Labor Party, California National Action Network, and California Poor Peoples Economic Human Rights Campaign.

The journey opened with a drum circle blessing ceremony in Fresno by Native American leaders. It affirmed the journey's central message: that all life is sacred, no matter how despised and disrespected by the world. We need to align ourselves with the intention of our Creator, and every thought, word, and action is a significant and powerful opportunity to do that. As David Alvarez said, the horses haven't forgotten how to be horses, the ants haven't forgotten how to be ants, the trees haven't forgotten how to be trees, but we human beings have forgotten how to be human beings.

Sister Adrienne celebrated our unity in spirit with a song version of the Lord's Prayer.

We visited seven towns in the course of the week:

Reedley

April 14— After a torrential rainfall, we participated in a meeting of about 100 people described by a local activist as "historic" both for its diversity and intensity. It focused on issues of health care, immigration, and law enforcement justice.

Fresno

April 15— We rallied at the Fulton Mall with a broad group including California National Action Network, California Prison Moratorium Project, Books Not Bars, Communications Workers of America, immigration protesters, and the ESPINO Coalition. Lucia Aguilar excelled as M.C.

April 16 — We attended Easter Sunday service at Fresno's United Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), a sister congregation to First Christian Church in San Jose. Then we held an interfaith Easter service and unity rally at Martin Luther King Middle School in Madera, led by Pastor Scott Wagers, Rev. Floyd Harris of Fresno, and CHAM Deacon Janel Martinez. The service included testimony by Madera residents Melchor Torres, whose son was shot to death by a police officer while handcuffed in back of a police car, and Julia Hernandez. A diverse crowd of about 80 enjoyed a simultaneous translation.

Merced

April 17 — We participated in a powerful program of song, youth dances, prayer, and testimony at Applegate Park. Peg Elwell of the Low-Income Self-Help Center testified about San Jose's successful Congressional Hearing on health care. A Hmong gentleman from Merced testified about community efforts to raise money for a \$30,000 surgery needed by one of his uninsured colleagues. That evening a group of us watched the "Learning As We Lead" DVD from the University of the Poor, and discussed the process of moving beyond single issue politics to a politics of economic human rights and economic justice.

Modesto

April 18 — We met at the Church of the Brethren with a group of about 50 people from diverse groups addressing issues of health care, environmental justice, education, and military counter-recruitment. Dantley Curry, Daryl Miller, Monika Kessling, Sandy Perry, Susan McCartney, and Merced's Dr. Sal Sandoval acted in a skit exposing the evils of our unjust health care system, and explaining the benefits of single payer universal care.

Stockton

April 19 — We were hosted by Luis Magana and Cristina Gonzalez at La Jamaica Mexican Community Center. We ate dinner with about 60 people and exchanged testimonies on MediCal abuses, immigrant struggles, and experiences battling to end poverty, followed by folklorico dancing by local young people.

Sacramento

April 20 — At the Capitol we met with Assemblywoman Sally Lieber, who hosted us with bagels, coffee, and juice while listening to our testimonies and tales of the journey. Unable to complete our meeting, we left to speak at a diversity fair at American River College and then a reception at Valley Hi Covenant Church. Sally Lieber met with us for an additional two hours at the church. She pledged her support and signed our Journey for Justice banner and was honored with a Native American song as part of our closing ceremony.

Throughout the Journey, especially toward the end, we held talking circles led by David Alvarez to help clarify our goals, evaluate our progress, connect with our Creator, and solve problems. As David reiterated frequently, we can't fight effectively for justice out there in the world if we don't have justice inside, in our hearts and in our own community.

CHAM's unique and most powerful contribution during the journey was to model a diverse, multi-racial, multi-cultural ministry, moving beyond the politics of race toward a politics of unity against all forms of poverty and oppression. In addition, CHAM's spiritual approach to the battle for justice resonated strongly with most of the leaders we met throughout the Valley. "If it's not a spiritual walk, we will not join it," said David Alvarez, but it was spiritual — every step of the way.

The journey's gains were the dissemination of hope and good news to the poor, the establishment of significant relationships, and a powerful unity transcending the different towns, issues, and struggles. Everywhere we went, people sug-

gested doing it again and continuing it annually. Rev. Ashiya Odeye of Sacramento related the time in 1968 he joined a caravan of 50 people in Atlanta that grew to 4000 by the time it reached New York City. The time for much larger actions is coming. This year's journey laid a powerful foundation.

Susanna Beauchan described in her journal one of the most emotional moments of the journey. After staying at the night at New Hope Christian Fellowship in Modesto, we met the next day with Chris, Jimmy, Mary and other leaders of Modesto Youth With a Mission. "We went with them to go feed people at a motel on Ninth Street," Susanna wrote. "It turned out I used to live there myself in 1998 when it was called the Modesto Breeze. Now it was called the Sandhaven Inn. The rooms were \$200 a month when I lived there. Now they were up to \$900 a month, and \$300 a month more for a refrigerator. The residents don't know where to get this kind of money. The landlord refuses to make repairs. There is mold everywhere in the rooms, broken windows, rats, roaches, dripping faucets, and more."

Susanna met an old friend of hers there, Esther Saldivar, who told us of repeated visits by CPS to take away people's kids from there. Another resident in a wheelchair, Dean Ellis, showed us photographs of the horrendous bedsores he received while treated at a Turlock hospital. More than any other stop, the visit to this motel clarified for us the purpose and reason for the Journey for Justice — to expose and abolish these kinds of injustices. We documented the conditions there by asking people to fill out economic human rights violation forms, and made arrangements to stay in contact with them and with Youth With a Mission.

"We learned there are a lot of brothers and sisters in the same boat as we are," wrote Susanna in conclusion. "We need to fight for our right to housing, health care, education, and against police abuse and other problems we are facing. We also learned a lot from people with other cultural backgrounds and roots."



End of an Era continued from page 1

"It's now excellent that the fourth hostel is about to close," Aldridge says. "It's symbolic of the way things are moving in Scotland."

However, while many think closing the hostels is a common sense move there are others who aren't so sure. Many of them are the men who live in the hostels. Some of them have lived in hostels for 10, maybe 20 years, and it is feared they simply won't be able to cope outside the communal hostel environment.

McGinty, who is looking forward to getting his own flat in the coming months, has no romantic illusions about hostel life. He says he hates not being able to see his children properly and has first hand experience of how bad it can get. Walking up the hostel steps last year, he was slashed in the face.

Despite such experiences, he still believes there is a need for hostels like Peter McCann. "There're always going to be people needing emergency accommodation so where are you going to put them if everywhere else is full? There are bed and breakfasts but they're always 'full' and you're just going to get more people sleeping rough.

"Some of the auld yins, they've lived their whole lives in places like this. Not everybody can have their own place. There are definitely people in here who are not ready for it."

Apprehensiveness, even fear, is a common reaction for the hostel residents who are still waiting to be re-settled. But for some of them a pleasant surprise may be waiting. In the south side of Glasgow, in the kind of town house more readily associated with financial high fliers, live eight former residents of the city's big hostels. Most of them have only recently moved in and they walk about the house and big garden as if they can't quite believe the space, cleanliness and tranquillity of the place. There is a member of staff for every resident and somebody sleeps over every night, it's a world away from the cramped confines of the hostels.

Alan used to live in the now closed Robertson House. Today, still settling down in his new home, he seems happy enough. He even treats me to a few verses of Burns, one of his favourite poets.

"It's very pleasant here indeed," he says. "I like the staff. They're friendly and helpful and understand my problems. I lived in the hostels for about three or four years. I like people more than anything. Furnishings don't interest me too much, although I have to admit this is a beautiful house. But it's the people that make a place."

He says he had no idea where he was going when the hostel he was staying in closed down. "I agree with the hostels shutting down. I feel more at home here. The other guys are very pleasant. I don't think I've had an argument since I came here; only with myself but I'm good at that," he smiles, just a bit sadly.

Alan realises he's one of the lucky ones. He knows the kind of place he's living in now is more exception than rule. "It's impossible to move all hostel residents to a place like this. The state hasn't got a bot-

tomless pit of money that can be poured into places like this. It would be great if we were all married with a semi-detached bungalow and two and half children, that would be the perfect scenario but it's not going to happen."

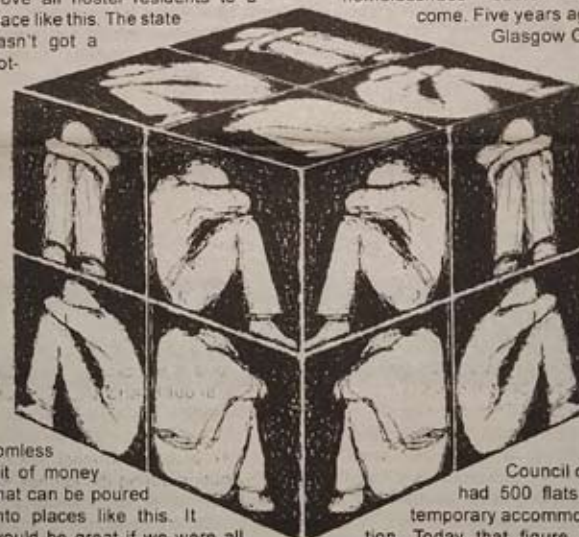
One thing Alan's new home does signify is the continuing evolution in the way homeless people are treated. Laurie Naumann, who worked for the Scottish Council for Single Homeless between 1978 to 1999 knows that more than most. He has seen first hand the change from Scotland being a place where councils didn't believe they had any responsibility towards the homeless to a place where everyone should soon be guaranteed a home. The

last large-scale, long-term hostel closed in Edinburgh just a few weeks ago - closures like this, and those in Glasgow, should be seen as a step in that transformation, he argues.

"In the 60s and 70s Glasgow took a proactive role in replacing the worst of the old private lodging houses. It was a hell of a lot better than what existed and at the time we were applauding them for doing it," Naumann says.

"But we were short-sighted. Thirty years ago we were still thinking that some people will only ever need hostel accommodation. People never really had the idea that single people deserved a house of their own as much as anyone else."

He says he's satisfied watching the progress, realising just how far the homelessness sector has come. Five years ago, Glasgow City



Council only had 500 flats for temporary accommodation. Today that figure has more than trebled. "There will always be people in crisis who will need somewhere to go because of a hiccup in their lives," he muses, "but in the past we have allowed the crisis to multiply and make things worse. Not now."

Sitting in a small office, by the forbidding doors of the Peter McCann, hostel decommissioner Bayne goes even further. She says closure is a "cornerstone" in the push to 2012: "It's something you can actually measure. It's a public statement: this is not what we want for homeless people.

"It would be very easy not to close the hostels. To tart them up a bit, reduce the numbers and stick a few en-suite bathrooms in and continue to ignore the problem," she concludes. "But Glasgow aren't trying to sweep the problem under the carpet. They are tackling it head on."

CASE STUDY:

Archie Johnston, 55, just settled in a city centre flat. He lived for two years in the Peter McCann hostel.

"Everything's going absolutely brilliant. To be honest with you I was originally very apprehensive when I was still in the hostel. I had a lot of good friends in there. But this flat is ideal. It's close to the centre of town. I've just completed a training course in social care, I've applied for a couple of positions so I'm rather hoping something will turn up. I kept myself to myself in the hostel. Though I did make what I consider to be some lifelong friends. Guys my own age, similar outlooks to life, and that's what's got me involved in social care. There was a guy in there - an ex-sailor - who was in and out of hospital and he wouldn't let the nurses near him. So I helped, and the staff said you should do this for a living. So I did. "I had no choice when I ended up in McCann. I would never have selected to go there. I came from managing a hotel, did a couple of jobs, ended up falling ill, having an argument with my then partner, and it was her house so I became homeless.

"Some people would find the hostel scary but I was used to taking care of myself so I didn't. The amount of needles that were left lying about was one of the hard bits to deal with.

"In my own situation, I was lucky. Having my own place has been essential to moving on. I've had some very good jobs in the past and I know, speaking to former colleagues, the minute you put Peter McCann house as your address you can forget getting an interview. The majority of people think you're a down and out and don't want to know. That's not the case for a lot of people. They are alright guys."

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Turn off, tune out

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by **Glen Cumbarelis**
Street Roots USA

Turn off, tune out and drop in on a new 'counter' culture

Disconnect from the circuit board and you might discover what you've been missing in life

Back in the 1960s, Timothy Leary coined the counter-culture slogan, "Turn on, tune in and drop out." Today, if you really want to "counter" culture, that is, if you want to break away from the mainstream, the exact opposite is true. You should turn off (your electronics), tune out (pop culture and the Uber-information age) and drop in (on your friends; i.e. back into life).

Your electronics are Big Brother. As people become more wired in to the cyber-information age with PCs, pods and camera phones, they sit in isolation and voluntarily put more of their own personal information online and out into the general ether. *These days, it isn't so much as Big Brother is watching as it is Big Brother is taking notes.* By data mining, wiretapping, etc., BB is able to not only

catch the bad guys but also monitor average citizens as well as trends in public opinion via the oversight of general Web content, e-mail and the ever-growing number of blogs. And it's not such a leap of logic to assume there is some attempt being made to steer those trends via strategic manipulation and psy-ops - I mean, how do you really know who is on the other end of that blog?

If you really want to dissent, turn off your PC, laptop, pod, phone and any other electronic connections to the mass media. Get your bank account off the Internet. Don't use credit cards to buy intellectual content. Keep one regular old landline telephone for convenience and emergencies but don't conduct business on it. Follow this advice and you'll "drop out" all right, and probably get to meet a real live CIA or FBI agent real soon, inquiring about just what the heck you are up to. Just laugh and say you got nostalgic for 1977.

Pod people: Admittedly, most of those notes being taken by

see **Tune Out page 7**

by **Elizabeth Halloway**

As we believe our collective illusion about borders, eras, right and wrong, it's like a diseased cell within our blood. Albert Einstein said, "No problem can be solved from the same consciousness that created it."

Reference points are essential to perspective. We've isolated the indigenous people on reservations, the Mexican people have not improved their own government and we don't want them to because they are a cheap labor farm for us. When they come here they live in poverty but yet are richer than they were in Mexico. What about sex slaves sent here for total disgrace? Americans are relatively secure. Some Mexicans are desperate. We are supposedly a country of laws but business people ignore that as do illegal immigrants. So the debate on both sides is equally hypocritical. It's important for foreign and domestic students to learn to see through appearances, deceptions and prevailing inequitable opinions.

Earned citizenship per se is a good idea. The devil is in the details. We do need control of the U.S./Mexico border. But why stop there? What about China, Canada, Iran, etc.? These are scary times. Perhaps North Americans should be disallowed travel to other lands. It gets silly, doesn't it? Walls don't seem to be the answer.

Learning English is a necessity here (although our own students score poorly in that area upon graduation). Conversely, it wouldn't hurt anyone to learn Spanish! There's nothing like being mutually interested. Then there can be true understanding. It's a start in sharing power. A one-time reasonable fine is acceptable. Everyone at some point requires medical care, that's a given. A clean criminal record with no ties to terrorism is paramount. For obvious reasons we should not separate American born children from their illegal immigrant parents. I suggest a living wage for all workers and letting qualified prisoners receive

minimum wage for supervised, regulated menial, more physical, tedious and unpleasant jobs. There should be an annual cap on any immigration across the board. This has budgetary, tracking and adaptation merit.

Finally, there are circumstances which should take priority. Just for a local example, do we need to cure homelessness, have a new sports arena or housing only for the affluent? This is an exponential situation which needs national attention before we even think about helping other cultures. No one can help another without a sense of wholeness. The Dalai Lama said, "Developing a kind heart does not involve any of the sentimental religiosity normally associated with it. It is for everyone irrespective of race, religion or political affiliation. It is for anybody who considers *themselves* a member of the human family." Simplistic perhaps. But we've been molded into thinking solutions are too complex.

Affordability runs parallel with stability

Street News Service www.streetnewsservice.org

by **Street Roots**
Editorial Board

A small tremor rippled through Seattle last month and social justice activists cheered. It was the decision by the Seattle City Council to raise the fee on high-rise condo development to pay for affordable housing. This surcharge, increased from \$10 to nearly \$19 a square foot, is expected to raise \$107 million and finance nearly 2,700 units of housing in the next two decades.

For a city dominated these days by an inflated real estate market and high-density development, the move helps correct an imbalance in the city's growth and planning. The movement behind the surcharge hit its stride this year with a massive public campaign, including shirts stating: "Developers stole my city and all I got was this lousy T-shirt."

It's a blunt message, but it reminds us that a city belongs to all of its residents, not just the ones with a large bankroll to move dirt.

Now, City Commissioner Erik Sten is bringing about a similar initiative in Portland. Sten, with the support of Commissioner Sam Adams, wants the city to dedicate up to 30 percent of tax increment revenue to increase affordable rental and homeownership options in urban renewal areas throughout the city. This new allocation would help provide the needed ongoing funding for safe and stable housing for low-income working families, seniors and people with disabilities.

The thrust of this proposal is Sten's Schools, Families and Housing Initiative aimed at retaining and attracting families with children in

public schools, and to stabilize families who move frequently from school to school - often a symptom of poverty. Families experiencing unstable or temporary working conditions, low wages, rising living expenses, and evictions are statistically shown to relocate more frequently, undermining children's education as they readjust to new schools.

Schools, along with parks, planning and other city operations, are at the center of what Sten is calling a neighborhood-based model for keeping families and working people living in the city.

The connection between healthy public schools and affordable housing is obvious, Sten says. Portland Public Schools are losing 300 to 500 students a year, straining the district financially. A survey

of those families who left the district mid-year showed that 68 percent said the lack of affordable housing as the central reason for their departure.

To correct this, Sten is calling on a collaboration of schools, developers, businesses, community organizations, real estate agents and city bureaus to focus their efforts on retaining families in the district.

Balanced development is at the crux of a healthy community for all walks of life. That's not just a utopian dream that cities are for everyone, but an economic reality that cities require a balance of professions, skill sets, interests and pursuits.

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Max's View

Republican Economics & Other Issues

By Max Biddle

It seems that it took an act of God to lay bare the reality of poverty in the United States. The hurricanes in the south exposed the Bush Administration's complete lack of preparedness, not only for dealing with natural disasters but with another terrorist attack. More importantly, it finally raised awareness of how deep and far reaching is poverty throughout the land. It also exposes the lack of interest in economics behind Republican policies, starting with their philosophy; they believe that every one should be able to pay for their health care and basic needs, as well as education, simply through their salaries produced by employment. This way they feel they can eliminate Social Security, Medicaid and all other Federal social programs. They say the free market system will work to provide everyone the basic needs.

Let's examine the policies and legislation over the years to see how Republicans have deliberately erected barriers to prevent the lower middle class and the working poor from accomplishing their independence from social programs.

Most Republicans always oppose minimum wage legislation that would help people make a decent wage so they can pay for their needs, free of outside help.

Most Republicans oppose unions and have deliberately erected legal and other barriers to prevent workers from organizing so as to maintain a standard of living to keep them from needing government assistance. They have cut back on aid to help educate a better work force and import more educated foreigners to replace Americans with less pay.

Most Republicans have supported worker programs that allow Mexican workers to cross the borders, legally or otherwise, so as to provide cheap labor for all types of farm and domestic labor. Labor they don't have to provide a living

wage or basic health care for.

Most Republicans have done nothing to stop the erosion of the pension funds that retirees worked in the private sector all their lives for.

So when you put Republican policies and philosophy all together you end up with a determined effort to create the conditions for permanent poverty and homelessness; for when they finally construct a work force making below subsistence wages the economy will self-destruct. A work force that cannot provide for its own healthcare and education will lose its ability to produce. The other catastrophic effect of low wages will be the elimination of the needed buying power of a population to purchase the goods and services that keeps a consumer economy going.

After more than twenty some years of these laissez-faire capitalist policies forced on the South Americans, which produced stagnate growth and massive unemployment leading to poverty, the people in that continent are throwing out governments who yielded to American pressure, who turned their economies into nothing more than a means for the global corporate structure to sap national resources for private benefit.

The disconnect between Republican policy and actual results is not that difficult to see. The truth is they really don't care about the lower rungs of our society— or are they incapable of evaluating the results of their policies?

Maybe it's time Americans learn what the rest of the world has learned about the Global economy; it is nothing but the trickle down economic theory on a global basis.

It seems that the local governments, *City and County*, still don't get the meaning of Constitutional Rights. The local authorities are again

renewing their harassment programs against our most needy citizens, the homeless. Notice I called the homeless 'citizens', a classification the authorities in Sacramento seem to be constantly in need of being reminded. Dealing with homelessness is not a blight situation, but a problem dealing with human beings who incidentally are citizens. The recent ordinance giving the police the authority to confiscate carts and other belongings is leading to indiscriminately taking personal property, contrary to what is guaranteed to every individual by the Constitution. Let's examine what's happening.

Amendment IV of the Constitution protects citizens in their right to possess personal papers and effects against unreasonable searches and seizures. No where does the Constitution say these rights are null and void if you do not have a place to live.

Amendment V of the Constitution says that no one shall be deprived of life, liberty, or property without due process of law. For the homeless the Constitution seldom comes into play when local officials deal with them, often ignoring the due process part.

At a time when the Bush Administration is determined to dismantle or recreate its own version of our national Constitution, it is time for citizens to become mindful that officials at all levels of government tend to change the laws to benefit themselves or clients.

I would like to say a fond farewell to Tim Brown. He will be missed. I found him to be a man of deep spiritual content whom genuinely cared about the people at Loaves & Fishes. He and his wife deserve a long vacation. Serving the poor is probably one of the most demanding of endeavors one can do. I shall remember Tim Brown always, as what the quality of human life can be.

Free Speech

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resistance (and greater shareholder value).

Disdain for free speech isn't new for this administration. Recently, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld scolded the press corps for printing too much bad news from Iraq – never mind if it was true or not, independent sources wavered from the official story from the Pentagon. In his criticism, Rumsfeld suggested reporters were even encouraging traitorous attacks. Let's not forget that this is the same leadership that acknowledged manufacturing feel-good propaganda pieces and planting them as unbiased news reports in the Iraq media.

Earlier in this term, when polls were more favorable toward the president, leaks of classified information were authorized by Lewis "Scooter" Libby's "superiors" in an effort to discredit a damning report against the administration regarding the build up to the war. Now, with even more damning evidence piling up against White House policies on domestic spying, torture and homeland security, the administration can claim the high road by clamping down on these insufferable leaks.

The threats of espionage charges and investigations are just the latest measure to end transparent governance as we know it. Bush has classified and closed more documents to the public than any other president. And recently the CIA began reclassifying documents as secret that were once publicly circulated.

New York Times Executive Editor Bill Keller, in a statement to The Washington Post on the crackdown on leaks, said, "I don't know how far action will follow rhetoric, but some days it sounds like the administration is declaring war at home on the values it professes to be promoting abroad."

In the name of the Pentagon Papers, Watergate, the Iran-Contra scandal, Jack Abramoff and national security, we say bring on the leaks. We cannot let secrecy sanction government malfeasance, and we cannot assume that something as fascist as government-controlled media will never happen here. Indeed, we're watching it unfold before our eyes, with a White House determined to be judge, jury and executioner of the truth.

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Tim Brown Hits the Road



by Paula

Many in Sacramento know or have heard of Tim Brown, most recently the Executive Director of Loaves & Fishes. He has done so very much toward benefiting the homeless population of Sacramento over the years. As Loaves & Fishes Director he saw the organization through some difficult times and has brought it back to a strong and better position. He has protected and advocated for respectful treatment toward those that find themselves without a home. He met with an unreceptive community and mended relationships. He kept his door and heart open to the Loaves & Fishes guests and employees.

He was recently the co-chair of the *Sacramento County and Cities Board on Homelessness* where he brought understanding of the plights of the homeless to the larger com-

munity, leading efforts towards the most effective means for addressing homelessness—HOUSING. He was a leader in formulating the 10-year plan to end chronic homelessness, starting the ball rolling towards the Housing 1st solution. He also chaired their Housing Committee.

We are most proud of him here at the Sacramento Homeless Organizing Committee because he was founder of our organization. Back in 1987 he helped form SHOC in response to a new anti-camping ordinance. He led many efforts opposing criminalization of homelessness and advocating for shelters and homeless services. I think he even helped form other organizations that served the homeless population. He was a founder of the Sacramento Housing Alliance in 1989, where he continued as an SHA board member to defend and bring about more affordable

housing to the Sacramento Region. When a bunch of us homeless folks took over the day to day operations of SHOC, we could always count on Tim for support and much technical assistance. He was always encouraging and enthusiastic about offering us the assistance we needed to succeed.

Anyway, Tim has left Loaves & Fishes and SHA and Sacramento to become homeless for a year with his wife, Cece. Actually, they will be rubber-tramps for a long deserved sabbatical. They'll be seeing the country by car, pulling along a 15 foot trailer. What a wonderful adventure!

But we will very much miss him and are very grateful for all the great work he has done for us over the years. We hope he comes back after his grand adventures to once again be such a great asset to our community.

Book Review: Opening Up, Beyond Anger and Shame

Street News Service www.streetnewservice.org

Reviewed by Silja J.A. Talvi

Conned: How Millions Went to Prison, Lost the Vote, and Helped Send George W. Bush to the White House
by Sasha Abramsky
New Press, 2006
Hardcover, 304 pages

Cruising down the Delta's blues-song-inspiring Highway 61 or through the prophetic-vision-prompting mountain ranges leading into the far more sullen, Mormon-controlled state of Utah, journalist Sasha Abramsky had no problem finding pockets of abject poverty, clusters of trailer homes, gaudy casinos, and ample evidence of communities struggling to stay alive despite the economic odds.

Abramsky's quest for his latest book, *Conned*, was to document the lives and struggles of this nation's most unwanted citizens: the impoverished, adjudicated, imprisoned, and disenfranchised. Finding the statistics and studies to indicate the extent of the problem wasn't a challenge. But getting people to open up about their anger and shame was a hurdle to overcome, opening the doors to real conversation about disenfranchisement involved, by

necessity, a willingness to immerse himself in the lives of people unaccustomed to any kind of real interaction with the media.

Abramsky is one of a small but increasingly influential set of modern-day journalists who have not only been able to identify persistent systems of inequality, but also the legislative and/or social trends that reinforce them continually. Such reporters not only celebrate the grand American tradition of muck-raking journalism, but intentionally defy the dominant reporting mode of bland and ostensibly "objective" newspaper reportage that asserts each point of view as equal. Known as "immersion" journalists, they are willing and able to dive into the worlds of which they write, in order to get to the real root causes of everyday strife and struggle. In doing so, these writers often find the most extraordinary of stories - and personal triumphs - amidst the ostensibly ordinary and mundane.

In *Conned*, Abramsky's challenge was to locate some of the five million disenfranchised American ex-offenders who could articulate their opinions about being deprived of the right to vote, whether temporarily or for the rest of their lives. Many former prisoners were suspicious of

his questions; others had already headed back into lives of criminality and wanted to stay there, undisturbed by a reporter's inquiries. The ones who talked destroyed his preconceptions of the disenfranchised masses as largely disinterested in their lack of political power.

Voting mattered for these ex-prisoners "far beyond the realm of the theoretical," as he was to realize in the course of researching and writing *Conned*. More often than not, Abramsky's sources talked to him "about how depressed, how angry, how disempowered they felt about not being able to vote, to be able to affect their [national and local politics]."

In Montana, Abramsky finds 21-year-old Chereesa, a Cheyenne-Navajo woman, who had done her time on a federal conviction for interstate transportation of marijuana. That Chereesa was merely 18 at the time of her arrest, pled guilty, and did her time didn't matter; her probation officer told her that she had lost her right to vote. "I wanted to vote," Chereesa states. "I'm a public kind of person... [not being able to vote] made me feel... like I was bad, like I was not a citizen anymore."

Actually, Montana's laws would have

allowed her to regain the right to vote. But miscommunication - or intentional disregard for the law - allowed for this common miscarriage of justice.

In states where the temporary or permanent disenfranchisement of ex-prisoners is on the books, the author finds their impact questionable, at best. What purpose is served by denying people the right to vote? More to the point, what self-respecting Western nation allows for such an obvious transgression of the most basic of democratic principles?

"[Th]ese disenfranchisement laws have no place in modern day society," as Abramsky puts it.

Silja J.A. Talvi is a member of Real Change's Advisory Board and a senior editor at In These Times, where a different version of this article first appeared. An investigative journalist and essayist with credits in many dozens of publications nationwide, she is at work on a book about women in prison (Seal Press).

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tune out

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Big Brother are pretty boring. Much of the high-tech paraphernalia available today is being used for banal purposes — I always say that PC also stands for pop culture. And there's so much filler out there in pop culture/consumerland that probably at least 75 percent of what's being talked about and transmitted is relative fluff, after all, as Marshall McLuhan said 40 years ago, the medium is indeed the message. It's the other 25 percent that Big Brother is concerned with. By contrast, the serious stuff must stand out like a sore thumb. The whole system has by now surely become sufficiently homogenized that any deviations must be easily spotted, probably, in fact, by bots.

That American culture might be monitored and steered largely by bots is sadly plausible — think about that for a moment. The crappy quality of commercial culture is crappy for a reason. So you'd best be advised to tune out of the mostly mindless mass consumer culture and create, along with your friends, your own.

Examine your art and culture choices, follow the money, think about who benefits. Don't watch multi-millionaire sports figures playing games on TV. Don't be a bot, mindlessly consumed with the whereabouts of Britney, Brad and Paris. Don't give a damn about Tiger, the Tigers or the Titans. Your life will be much fuller for it. Drop by, say hi. Being less connected might be your Santa Claus. When was the last time you just dropped by someone's house?

Our crowded lifestyle encourages psychological distance and insulation from each other and we have cell phones to keep in touch as we drive around in our sealed-up luxury cushmobiles that also track our movements via the onboard computer PCs for business. Pods for art. Life at an arm's,

or rather a button's, reach. The icon of bot is relevant. We work, we insulate, we buffer out reality with pop culture, we live within constraints, we endure pension buyouts and corrupt CEOs and an outrageously criminal health care system, and, if we can, we retire to the "new hot retirement mecca" that was gouged out of a pristine forest somewhere in the West by a developer from Atlanta, then we die.

There used to be a phrase you don't hear much anymore: socially induced limitations. We are indeed on the road to becoming bots. Or perhaps, we are bought, as in bought off by trading life for small appliances and convenience and contrivance. You don't have to go live in the woods, just realize what you are spending your money on. Don't be a fool. Big Brother depends on you to volunteer your personal life online and over the airwaves. Instead, drop in on your friends and talk about the state of the nation. Go camping and sing "Kumbaya" instead of listening to another generic Bono tune on your pod.

Forward into the past. In short, it's time to go backwards. Disconnect from the grid and plug in to dropping out by dropping back into life. If you unplug you'll have so much more time to enjoy what little nature is left as development creates more boxes for people to plug their electronic gizmos into. Go against the flow, that's the real way to dissent these days. There's nothing good on TV anyway. And don't let the bastards wear you down. Turn off, tune out and drop in.

Glen Cumbarelis is a former mainstream media reporter and editor now working as a free-lance writer living in the Eugene area.

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Obituary

Arturo Trujillo
d. 10/2/05
of burns

**Artre "Wolf"
Haynes**
d. 3/3/06 age 52

**Wayne
Scantlebury**
d. 3/5/06
of gunshot
by police

**"Gino"
Murray**
d. 3/9/06 age 59
in sleep in
abandoned building

**Vaughn
Sweet**
d. 3/16/06
cause
unknown

**Linda Garcia
Rodriguez**
d. 4/12/06 age 42
of natural causes
in L.A.

Eric Auman
d. 4/21/06 age 38
in sleep at friend's house

Richard Haller
d. 5/31/06 age 42
Killed in motorcycle accident.
Worked as L&F night watchman
for several years

**Vincent
Cheler**
d. 6/6/06 age 46
of pulmonary
embolism

**Terrence
Jones**
d. 6/8/06 age 48
cause pending,
found in storage
locker

**Matthew
"Marty" Matz**
d. 6/11/06 age 42
of natural causes

Koren "Kori" Kiene
d. 6/15/06
cause pending

Lisa Ryan
d. 6/18/06 age 42
of liver disease
in hospital

Verne Davis
d. 6/20/06 age 41
cause pending