

BCA Dispatch

Newsletter of the **Boston-Cambridge Alliance for Democracy** September 2004

Our beloved land has been fogged with fear—fear, the greatest political strategy ever. An ominous silence, distant sirens, a drumbeat of whispered warnings and alarms to keep the public uneasy and silence the opposition. And in a time of vague fear, you can appoint bullet-brained judges, strip the bark off the Constitution, eviscerate federal regulatory agencies, bring public education to a standstill, stupefy the press, lavish gorgeous tax breaks on the rich.

There is a stink drifting through this election year. It isn't the Florida recount or the Supreme Court decision. No, it's 9/11 that we keep coming back to. It wasn't the "end of innocence," or a turning point in our history, or a cosmic occurrence; it was an event, a lapse of security. And patriotism shouldn't prevent people from asking hard questions of the man who was purportedly in charge of national security at the time.

—Garrison Keillor, *In These Times*, 20 Sept 2004

ALLIANCE NEWS (Continued on Page 8)

Chapter Calendar

* * **Sudan Nightmare** * *

Boston-Cambridge Alliance for Democracy will meet on **Wednesday, September 15** from 7:00 to 9:15 p.m. at **Cambridge Friends Meeting house**, 5 Longfellow Park (9-minute walk from Harvard Square T station, west on Brattle St.)

— Agenda —

Darfur, the land of the Fur people in Africa's Sudan, is engulfed in blood and flame. Is this Rwanda, Bosnia, or Timor again? What will regional or global powers do? Discuss these matters with Prof. **Willard Johnson** of MIT, founder of the Boston Pan-African Forum, and others. You may want to read Samantha Power's article on Darfur in *The New Yorker* of 30 August 2004. See the article by Eric Reeves in the adjoining column.

— Refreshments —

Chavez's Venezuela Fighting Chance for an Egalitarian Society?

by Rosa Maria Pegueros, CommonDreams.org, 23 Aug 2004

In the wake of Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez's victory in the attempt by the opposition to recall him last week, one might ask, what does Chavez have that Fidel Castro of Cuba, Jacobo Arbenz of Guatemala, and Salvador Allende of Chile lacked? Is it his charisma? Populist ideals? A restive elite? An antagonistic and powerful northern neighbor? No, they all shared those attributes and handicaps.

Oil. Hugo Chavez has oil, one of the largest reserves in the world and a fifty percent increase in (Continued on page 6>>)



"Death: Don Quixote" (detail) by Jose Guadalupe Posada

Deathly Silence on Darfur Growing Genocide—the World's Disgrace

by Eric Reeves, *In These Times*, 20 Sept 2004

Darfur continues its relentless slide into greater catastrophe, with no adequate humanitarian or diplomatic response on the horizon. More than 100,000 displaced Sudanese have died, and another 2,000-plus die daily. By the year's end, the death toll could stand at more than 400,000. Conditions in the refugee camps in neighboring Chad range from poor to appalling. Many of the displaced persons—perhaps more than 1 million—have no resources whatsoever and are dying agonizing, invisible deaths.

The National Islamic Front regime in Khartoum, which precipitated the genocide in response to the insurgency that began in February 2003, has continued to impede humanitarian relief. They recently grounded U.N. World Food Program planes, even though many children suffering from Severe Acute Malnutrition may perish because of a single day's delay in food.

More disturbingly, Khartoum has inaugurated a policy of forcible expulsions from camps for the displaced. The African tribal populations that are the targets of Khartoum's genocide are being forced, typically violently, to return to "their villages." But the villages of these mainly Fur, Massaleit and Zaghawa peoples largely have been destroyed. As numerous aid workers have observed, forced return is a death sentence: There is no food and people returning are easy prey for the marauding Arab militia forces, known as the *Janjaweed*. (Continued, page 2>>)

Janjaweed predations continue unchecked and have reached new levels of cruelty. Numerous reports, including from the small contingent of African Union ceasefire monitors, offer accounts of children being hurled serially into the flames of burning huts and buildings. One African Union report includes a picture of the charred remains of eight schoolgirls who were chained together. And as a new Amnesty International report makes clear, rape continues to be used as a weapon of war.

Khartoum's culpability in this disaster is beyond dispute. Any lingering doubts about the responsibility of the regime were incinerated in July by a Human Rights Watch report that revealed internal government documents indicating Khartoum both armed and coordinated the *Janjaweed*.

Despite these grim reports, the only meaningful action—humanitarian intervention accompanied by necessary military protection—looks unlikely. The reality of genocide has not galvanized U.S. action. A bipartisan congressional resolution unanimously declared the killings in Darfur to be genocide and called on the Bush administration to do so as well. The State Department, however, continues to dither, denying that such a declaration would change anything.

This is not true: Article 1 of the 1948 U.N. Genocide Convention obliges contracting parties (including the United States and all members of the U.N. Security Council) to "prevent" genocide. Yet the burdens and consequences of U.S. military intervention in Iraq make U.S. leadership at this critical moment politically unimaginable. An appropriate response from the United Nations is no more promising. An already weak U.N. Security Council Resolution, proposed by the United States, survived only after the removal of a meaningless threat of sanctions against Khartoum. Both veto-wielding China and Pakistan abstained in the Darfur resolution vote, urging that Khartoum be given more time to disarm the *Janjaweed*. China is motivated in particular by its huge investments in oil development in Sudan.

The Arab League subsequently weighed in with a similar demand, while the Organization of the Islamic Conference fully sided with Khartoum out of religious and anti-Western solidarity. The reality on the ground is that more time simply makes possible greater incorporation of the *Janjaweed* into Khartoum's regular military and police. The *genocidaires* will control the camps. All this occurs on the 10th anniversary of the world's shameful failure to respond in Rwanda. Peace talks between Khartoum and the insurgency groups may begin in late August. Their chances of yielding meaningful results are negligible, given the appeasing words from Kofi Annan's new special representative for Sudan, Jan Pronk, who declared in early August that he found security improving in camps for the displaced and a regime responding in good faith—despite massive evidence to the contrary. This is all the encouragement Khartoum needs to remain intransigent.

Annan apparently is convinced that the Security Council will be embarrassingly divided on Darfur and thus ineffectual in its response. He has consequently settled on a course of expediency and is looking for ways to ensure that the August 30 deadline of the Security Council Resolution doesn't have the force of a true deadline. The resolution "demands" that Khartoum disarm the *Janjaweed*; but this clear-cut demand has devolved into a series

of vague benchmarks that make any assessment of Khartoum's responsiveness a matter of judgment on the part of Pronk and Annan.

Inspired by this reaction, Khartoum promptly rejected the African Union proposal to put a significant number of peace-keeping forces on the ground in Darfur—one of the only meaningful steps contemplated so far. Obstructing international humanitarian intervention in any form remains Khartoum's highest priority. That it has so thoroughly succeeded in this strategy is a measure of the world's disgrace. #



Refugees at the Kounougo camp, in eastern Chad. Sudan's army has vowed to fight any foreign forces sent into its western Darfur region and called a U.N. resolution to resolve the crisis "a declaration of war."

*You who are lengthening your lives
with the best doctors and the best medicines
remember those who are shortening their lives
with the wars
that you in your long lives are not
preventing.*

*You who are again screwing
the younger generations
and winking at each other
the winking of your eyelids
is like the chill of the swinging shutters
in an empty house.*

—Yehuda Amichai (1924-2000)

(Israel. Translated from the Hebrew, by Leon Weiseltier.)

In the Maw of the Elephant Reports from Republican Convention

by Jim Tarbell, Editor, Alliance Alerts

New York, 30 August 2004 — Military Glory

As I walked onto the floor of the convention Congresswoman Heather Wilson, who is a graduate of the Air Force Academy, began to speak and as she spoke a huge image of an aircraft carrier rose behind her on the screen. She extolled the virtues of the military, which began a huge military buildup within the convention. After Heather, they interviewed delegates who were veterans of the Iraq war Vietnam War, Korean War and on and on. It turns out that one out of five delegates is a vet, which gave the Republican convention a particularly heavy military emphasis.

Then as I sat there pondering this military dominance of the convention they sprang into a celebration of the five branches of the military. And they did literally spring, because an entire chorus sprang up out of the floor and began singing the various anthems of the military services. "From the Halls of Montezuma. . ." At the same time they showed a plethora of military images on the big screen, logos, weapons, soldiers in uniform, and the whole convention joined in song. It was an incredible commemoration of a military culture. It that went on and on.

John McCain spoke near the end of the night and, though John McCain is a political realist and must have some understanding of the anger the world feels toward America, he immediately launched into a long tirade supporting the war. His words morphed into what Rudy Giuliani said. They both clung to George W. Bush's analysis that we had been attacked for our freedoms and went on to declare that Americans are spreading freedom in the world and that the Republican Party, more than anything, is the spreader of freedom.

Well, this was a little much for me to take. You may not know this, but I grew up in a Republican family and worked for a Republican Congressman when I was in college amidst the Vietnam War and have heard this stuff for too long. The US was certainly not spreading freedom in Vietnam. Then I went to South America in the Peace Corps, and while I was there Nixon's Republican administration overthrew the democratically elected Allende government in Chile. Then during the eighties I watched as Reagan's Republican administration suppressed popular movements in Nicaragua, El Salvador and in Guatemala.

When the Republicans say they are spreading freedom, they are not talking about spreading human freedom, but rather the freedom of money do whatever it wants around the world. Since the Republicans have a lot of money it seems freedom equals the freedom of the moneyed elite to exert their power anywhere they want. Unfortunately the freedom to use the power of money to control the planet oppresses human freedom around the world.

But the biggest applause of the night came when John McCain referred to Michael Moore as "this disingenuous film maker". The Republican convention Hall erupted in boos and it carried on for five or ten minutes. In fact McCain got such a rise that he repeated the line four or five times and always got the same response,

thunderous boos.

The odd thing is that Michael Moore was at the convention that night. I found him first at the Farley Media Center where he was surrounded by reporters and, although he claimed that he just wanted to get to his seat, I ran into him three more times surrounded by cameras. But apparently he was in one of the skyboxes and as the Republicans chanted "Four More Years," because then the cameras picked out Michael Moore predicting that the Republicans had just two more months.

New York, 31 August 2004 — Compassion on a Stick

This was the evening to show that the Republicans are "People of Compassion." It was writ huge on the screen behind the podium. It was ballyhooed on banners rimming the upper deck of Madison Square Gardens and it was extolled by speakers all night long.

I arrived on the floor as Elizabeth Dole was proclaiming that the traditional compassion of the American people were the traditional values that the Republicans have been talking about all week and implied somehow that Republicans own these values.

With the following speakers this morphed into faith based initiatives that were the best way of taking care of the army of unemployed that capitalism needs in order to maintain a cheap labor force. It was related to protecting fetuses, a stance that really protects the patriarchy. They claimed that advances made by American compassion have been the initiative of the Republicans, that they had to battle the segregationist Democrats to pass the civil rights acts in the 1960s. There was no mention of that the Civil Rights Act was mainly an initiative of a Democratic President or that most of those segregationist Democrats are now Republicans and what give the Republicans control of both the House and the Senate.

It was a day that some delegates went out and volunteered, no doubt in faith-based programs and these undertakings were displayed big on the screen, but none of the delegates from Missouri that I spoke with participated. They had spent the day touring ground zero and avoiding demonstrators.

Then the symbol of the Patriarchy itself came onto stage, Arnold Schwarzenegger who talked about the way that Americans have compassionately helped the immigrant. Of course care and connection with immigrants is a compassion historically more associated with the Democratic party than the Republican party, but if the Republicans are going to get any compassion I guess they have to take it from the Democrats. Though they claim the heritage of Lincoln and the Civil Rights Movement of the fifties, their initiatives to target immigrants in California and from the Middle East leaves them on thin ice in the world of compassion for immigrants.

As the Republicans spoke of their invented compassion, a voice rang out. From the fringe of the convention it tried to instill some true compassion in the Republicans. Its message was mainly relegated to the bowels of the building. "Stop the killing in Iraq. Stop the killing in Iraq. Stop the killing in Iraq!" It was a mantra that continued throughout the ensuing chaotic and heart-rending scene.

In an instant I knew it was the voice of feisty Medea Benjamin of code Pink and global Exchange who was always investing such inveterate halls with her heroic activism. She had found her way past all of the security onto the rim of the convention floor. I had seen her half an hour earlier speaking with Amy Goodman in the press area off the convention floor. She had said "Hi," but was not effusive and from past experiences I have learned not to gush things like "Medea, what're you doing here?"

Now, as I came back down the stairs off the floor I knew what she was doing here. Trying to put some true compassion into the disingenuous Republican scene. When she did this with the Democrats she was always treated with some level of compassion and always escorted, if somewhat brusquely, out of the event. For the Republicans there was no compassion. They treated it as terrorist threat.

The first I saw her a horde of monster Secret service dudes were piled on top of her tiny body and she was still yelling, "Stop the Killing in Iraq." The secret Service took over the area screaming, "This is a secure area." They pushed media and photographers out of the way; menacing anyone who tried to record the scene. By now there was a battalion of Secret Service Agents pulling and dragging Medea's tiny body down the hall as she continued to demand "Stop the Killing in Iraq." I only got a picture of the suit of a Secret service agent holding a hand They would not let anyone in the area an hour later. They closed it off as if this brave act of true compassion had been the scene of a terrorist attack. ****



US Army Extravaganza for Children Now Showing Live in Worcester and Albany

"A youth decides to follow his grandfather in the path of military service." "Divided into two acts, *Spirit of America* uniquely combines traditional military ceremony with a large-scale theatrical production, creating an action-packed performance that showcases military vehicles, bayonets, bravery, sacrifice, music and a spectacular light and sound show that fills the entire arena floor." It's free! (Your tax money) Endorsed by Worcester elementary, middle, and high school principals! In Albany NY 24-25 Sept. Check <http://worcester.indymedia.org/news/2004/09/248.php>

New York, Police State for RNC Week Ordinary Cops OK, Mayor Flouts Law

by David Jacobus, New York Paralegal, 1 Sept 2004

Coming home from work and turning on the TV reveals a frightening difference between what is outside my door and what is reported. I currently live in Times Square which is blocks away from the Republican National Convention and where many of the delegates are staying.

Our skies have gunships, our waters have gunboats, our streets have machine gun, shotgun, and tear gas wielding uniformed officers lining the street. Plain-clothes officers make arrests without showing ID or announcing who they are. Blimps with military photography equipment monitor from above and trucks with cameras line the streets. Police cars, motorcycles, trucks, and tinted window escorts drive up and down the streets with their sirens on all day for no apparent reason. FBI agents are questioning people on the streets and making arrestees fill out personal questionnaires in jail which include questions such as you opinion on interracial marriage. Searches of everyday Americans are being conducted on the streets without probable cause.

Currently between 1000 and 2000 people arrested the past few days are being held in an abandoned pier (Pier 57) which has razor wire covered fenced out cells and no seating. Detainees are forced to stand or lie on the oil-covered cement floor while they await processing. These people are merely awaiting Desk Appearance Tickets which are literally a ticket which give you a court date and don't require lengthy incarceration. Some reports indicate there are detainees who haven't even been officially arrested or read rights. It's hard to tell though because currently people are being held for up to 36 hours without access to lawyers, who are turned away at the detention camp. This is odd because the usual court business shut down this week to accommodate RNC arrests. In addition, the National Lawyers Guild which is trying to represent arrestees is reportedly having their phone conversations monitored by both the Police and FBI...

Currently, any one who opposes the current administration as well as those who happen to be near them on the streets are being considered suspect and treated as such. I have been approached only a block from my apartment with the question, "Are you an anarchist?" while wearing merely my law firm attire (shirt and tie). I am also scared to death because I was confronted with an attempt to entrap me in conspiring to commit a capital felony down the block from my apartment. These are not lies, they are happening to others too. I was nearly arrested on Monday on my way home from work trying to get the name of a man who was being arrested in the subway. The police shout, taunt, lie, push, and actively attempt to deny legal assistance even when it is just one-on-one, as in my situation. We support the plight of the rank and file cops who have been denied a contract by the city, and they have been done yet another disservice by their leadership's choice of tactics this week...

Contact the author at aristophonos@yahoo.com

October Surprise? Bombing Iran for Fun and Profit

by Steve Weissman, *truthout*, 2 Sept 2004

The President of the United States has branded Iran part of the "Axis of Evil." He has demanded that Iran "abandon her nuclear ambitions."... Both houses of Congress recently passed resolutions calling on the president "to use all appropriate means to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons."

The Americans now have nearly 150,000 troops just across the border in Iraq. They also have aircraft and missiles in easy striking distance, as do the Israelis, who are currently working with the Kurds to make raids into Iran.

Put yourself in Israel's shoes. The Iranians are building a major nuclear industry, with the ability to enrich bomb-grade Uranium-238 and reprocess plutonium from spent nuclear fuel rods. Iran has facilities in Tehran, Bushehr, Natanz, and Arak, and could soon produce 15-20 nuclear weapons a year, according to the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. The International Atomic Energy Agency has already found traces of the bomb-grade U-238 in Natanz and Tehran. The Iranians say this is only contamination from used centrifuges they bought from other countries. An Iranian Bomb would challenge Israel's nuclear monopoly in the Middle East, creating a short-range, hair-trigger stand-off that would continually encourage each side to strike first before the other could.

Now think like an American neo-conservative. You and your fellow policy wonks have struggled for years to persuade both Democrats and Republicans in Washington and successive Likud governments in Tel Aviv to play hardball throughout the Middle East. You urged them to expand control over the world's diminishing supply of oil and to overthrow nasty regimes, especially in Iraq and Iran. Your neo-con colleagues currently hold key posts in the Pentagon and elsewhere in Washington, but your policies and performance have made a hash of Iraq, causing President Bush to turn increasingly to other advisers. Worse, Mr. Bush could lose the November election amidst a burgeoning spy scandal that widely paints neo-cons, whether Christian or Jewish, as not-to-be-trusted Israeli agents.

As in the perfect storm, the activities of the three groups—Iranian Ayatollahs, Israeli Likudniks, and American neo-cons—are now creating just the right conditions for a ghastly outcome—an aerial attack on Iran's nuclear installations. While no one can predict with certainty where the madness might lead, it would clearly isolate Israel and the United States even more from most of the world, unify rival Shi'ite and Sunni Muslims, and encourage the Iranians to intervene massively in Iraq.

On the other hand, an October Surprise to make America safe from an Islamic Bomb might help Mr. Bush win a close election... Can anything stop a "pre-emptive" attack on Iran, whether before the elections or—as I think more likely—after?... The Bush Administration has given Iran the strongest argument yet for wanting atomic bombs—and the missiles to drop them on Tel Aviv...

Senators Kerry and Edwards, the Democratic contenders, have suggested offering Iran "a great bargain." If the Iranians give up

their capacity to produce bomb-grade materials and accept full supervision to ensure that they have, other countries, including the United States, will provide whatever nuclear fuel Iran needs.

It's a great start. But a Kerry Administration would also have to offer security guarantees far beyond any yet mentioned, or any they could easily mention. Too many Americans still remember with bitterness the pictures of Ayatollah Khomeini's young supporters holding fifty-two of our fellow citizens as blindfolded hostages. The Great Satan, as the Iranians called us, does not forgive and forget without an enormous effort...

For the Israeli Likudniks, and for me personally, the situation looks like déjà vu all over again. We all saw the same thing back in 1981, when Prime Minister Menachem Begin took on the French government of then-Prime Minister Jacques Chirac, which was helping Saddam Hussein build his OSIRAK nuclear reactor near Baghdad. Israel's Mossad led the charge. In April 1979, secret saboteurs entered a small French engineering firm on the French Riviera in Toulon, where they dynamited the reactor core only hours before the Iraqis could take delivery. In June 1980, in a hotel room in Paris, an unknown intruder bludgeoned to death an Egyptian nuclear engineer who played a leading role on the OSIRAK project. In August, a series of bombings and telephone threats terrorized French and Italian engineering firms supplying equipment to OSIRAK...

The daring Israeli [on the Iraqi nuclear reactor in 1981] attack still stands as a model of pre-emptive warfare, which the Israelis now threaten to repeat on Iran. According to one recent news story, they have already rehearsed the bombing run, much as they did before sending their American-supplied F15's and F16's to wipe out OSIRAK.

But, before jumping on the bandwagon, please remember some oft-forgotten facts. Prime Minister Begin rushed the attack in part because he feared his party would lose a close election. Seeing military action as the only remedy, he also feared that his opponent Shimon Peres would try working diplomatically with the newly elected French President Francois Mitterand, who had already ordered significant steps to safeguard the Iraqi reactor. On the other side, one of Begin's staunchest supporters for the attack was his Minister of Agriculture, Ariel Sharon.

For the American neo-cons, recent events could push them to become even more extreme. The [current] Israeli spy flap involving retired Air Force Col. Larry Franklin focuses heavily on Iran, and the cooperation between leading neo-cons, the Israelis, and Iranian exiles to overthrow the Ayatollahs. There are also suggestions of improper Pentagon arms transfers to Israel, unauthorized back-channel dealings with foreign governments and private groups, and the question of how closely the American Israeli Public Affairs Committee, the chief pro-Israeli lobby group, works with the Sharon government.

All of this will terribly embarrass the neo-cons, who will grasp at any straw to divert attention from both their failures in Iraq and their efforts behind the scenes. Enlarging the Iraq war to Iran offers the perfect solution. In the advice often attributed to their Pentagon protector, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, "If you're having difficulty dealing with small problems, make them bigger." ##

government revenues because of the rising prices for it on the global market.

Both President George W. Bush and the Democratic challenger, John F. Kerry, have characterized him as an "anti-democratic leader" but considering Hugo's program and achievements in office, one can only wonder what common meaning "democratic" can have to two men who profess to disagree upon so many issues. If, by democratic, they mean a government run by a small plutocracy that controls all of the country's wealth, then I suppose that Chavez is anti-democratic. If they mean leaders who funnel the people's money into the pockets of their friends, then I suppose he is anti-democratic. In fact, if they mean men who identify with the poor to the point of putting programs in place that will lift the entire society in a generation, then Chavez is certainly anti-democratic. It might be nice to live in an anti-democratic country if this is what democratic means in the Alice-in-Wonderland parallel world of American presidential politics.

But if democracy means to be by, for, and of the people, then Hugo Chavez might want to take a turn as U.S. president when he has cleaned up Venezuela.

The elites in Venezuela are wild with rage at Chavez to the point that they conducted a six-year-long strike in an attempt to disrupt the economy that failed only because the oil money kept it from complete collapse. The bank fraud that crippled the Venezuelan economy before Chavez came to power has been ignored by the opposition as one possible source of its misery. Somehow we have all become so accustomed to major fraud by multinational corporations such as the Enron and Arthur Anderson swindles that we have come to regard them as the price of doing business. It is not and should not be so.

The referendum on Chavez's rule is a result of that economic battery. One woman, an unemployed lawyer who has been seen on CNN news reports selling socks out of the back of her SUV describes Chavez, in English, as a communist, spitting out the word with the force of an expletive. Now that he has faced them down, they are trying to convince the world that Chavez stole the election.

Fidel Castro's health workers only make the case for them: Peasants who previously suffered and died prematurely because of the inaccessibility of health care, now have a chance at a better life because of Cuba's influx of health workers dispatched to work in Venezuela's poorest sectors.

Thousands who formerly had no chance for a decent wage and no hope of an education are now benefiting from the oil cash flowing in to finance infrastructure redevelopment and literacy programs. Yet to hear the American media tell the story, Chavez proves his communist leanings by meeting with Fidel Castro. Well, I haven't seen George Bush sending any health workers or teachers to help the plight of the lower classes in Venezuela. As my mother says, you catch more flies with honey than with vinegar. If Bush wanted to undermine communism in Venezuela, perhaps real aid that didn't end up in the pockets of the rich would be a place to start. This is an obvious lesson that our money-obsessed leaders have failed to learn.

Various Latin American governments have attempted to redistribute wealth but most have had to struggle with the finite resources held in the hands of the upper classes. The "redistribution of wealth" in Castro's Cuba, in Arbenz's Guatemala, or Allende's Chile required wresting existing real estate ownership and other wealth from the elites who had controlled it for centuries. In the case of Guatemala, Arbenz bought back land left to lie fallow by the United Fruit Company, an American corporation, which had "purchased" it for a song. It cried foul when Guatemala tried to buy it back for the same price.



If Chavez is distributing new oil monies that are not already in the hands of the elites, then what are they so upset about?

The first thing is the simple affront to their sense of entitlement in having a "monkey" as some have called him, at the head of their government. Despite the centuries of profound racial mixing of all four races throughout Latin America, an agreed-upon fiction exists: The upper-classes consider themselves to be white, and everybody else is either an indio or a negro_. If the whites are feeling kindly towards los indios then they call them los inditos the little Indians, as if the diminutive could be anything but patronizing.

A quick look at Latin America both past and present reveals that only a minuscule number of leaders have been from the lower classes, and even fewer from dark-skinned communities. Benito Juarez, Mexico's great 19th century reformer was a dark-skinned "Indian" from Oaxaca whose detractors also called him a "black monkey."

Their second objection to Chavez is the obvious one: If the country is flush with oil money, why aren't the upper-classes entitled to it, especially since this has always been the case? The SUV-driving sock lady lawyer springs to mind. Why is the economy of Venezuela so bad that she and others like her are without jobs? Is the attempt by the elites to cripple the economy to blame for their plight? Or are Chavez's policies tipping so far in favor of the poor that the traditional elites are locked out? And what about that bank scandal?

Finally, there is the matter of shifting power. If Chavez succeeds in changing the balance of power in Venezuela to one with truly broad representation and succeeds in creating a literate and even well-educated society with full employment, the masses will be harder for the elites to control. Capitalism depends on the availability of cheap labor and uneducated, disenfranchised masses. Chavez's success could create an egalitarian society that has the power to resist the United States's hegemony. It sounds like a pipe dream, no?

Looking at the United States today, at the paucity of women and people of color in the highest levels of government; at a Senate that does not have a single African-American and at a U.S. Supreme Court without a single Hispanic, it may be too much to hope that Chavez alone can work a democratic miracle in Venezuela.

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US and UK Crotchology Confessions of a *Dispatch* Editor

As a freshman at a well-known all-male college I suffered and seethed as German language professor Herr Jantz coursed the classroom slapping his ruler on his open palm. I quit the class and transferred to Spanish language professor X's class, where I would eventually be introduced to Unamuno and other memorable authors. After a few sessions this youngish professor halted our struggle with difficult vocabulary and said "OK, let's spend the rest of the hour learning some words you want to know." At which juncture he introduced us, to our amusement, to all the *macho* gutter language we had time for. Wonderfully, attention improved.

Last week, after four comments on election content and one on my editorial in our August issue, another caller asked for extra copies in order to distribute election articles, but exploded with dismay about the—shall we say, salacious?—photo (Fig. A) on the cover. She came over, and carefully scotch-taped a small antiwar poster over the photo, before taking it to the copy shop. Since then one other woman also expressed consternation—what if someone's grandchildren were to see that photo? OK. So I made up an alternative front page (Fig. B). You can compare the two below. If you would like copies in this alternative format, contact us (See Colophon, page 8).

In subsequent talks with readers I raised the question. No male reader had spontaneously commented on the picture. Two female readers responded with hesitant amusement—one saying it was certainly attention-getting, the other turning angry at her fellow feminists.

As if by synchronicity, two British political publications reached me just now. Shown below are page 6 of *Red Pepper* (Sept 2004, Fig. C) and the cover of *The Ecologist* (Sept 2004, Fig. D). We are all having political fun with more-or-less nude female figures. Note that the editor of *Red Pepper*, Hilary Wainwright, is a woman.

Perhaps the problem was that our photo may have seemed gratuitous. The August *Dispatch* did not actually report on the demonstrations around the Democratic party convention, although the Alliance convention and the Boston Social Forum, which we have been plugging, were timed to immediately precede the DNC. We just thought it was current, movement-related, and funny. Clearly, the California woman's act was political, and that's appropriate for the *Dispatch*. Behind the scenes politics has always been raunchy. Now we need to get real politics out of the closet. We suspect that the flap was over the California woman's apron looking too realistic.

Or don't you think so? If you think that *BCA Dispatch* can do better, please join our editorial board. Call the editor.



Fig. A. *BCA Dispatch*. Caption reads: California protester feigns pelvic ventriloquism at Dem convention. Apron reads Democrats' New Slogan— "Read my lips: No more Bush" [mimicking G H W Bush's 1988 slogan "Read my lips: No new taxes"] Apron portrays shaved pubis with narrow g-string.



Fig. B. *BCA Dispatch*. Caption reads: In Copley Sq. 912 pairs of boots represent US soldiers killed in Iraq by late July.



Fig. C. *Red Pepper* magazine. Page 6 caption reads: Banksy sculpture defies the law. The art activist mounted this heroic (12-ft?) Lady Liberty, representing the US, in a busy London park. She wears the spiked crown, carries a scale of justice in one hand and a sword in the other. You can see her attire.

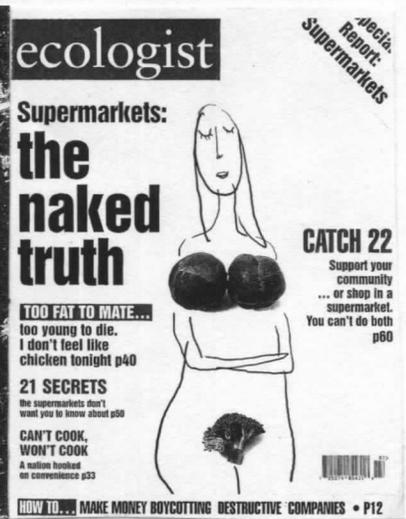


Fig. D. *The Ecologist* magazine. Cover reads: Special Report: Supermarkets. Line drawing of nude female sports full-color brussels sprouts as breasts, and a broccoli sprig as pubic hair.

POPULAR EDUCATION— Key Principles of Paolo Freire

- No education is ever neutral—education is either domesticating or liberating
- Relevance—issues of importance now to participants—issues with strong feeling - excitement, hope, fear, anxiety or anger
- Problem-posing—contrasting to the banking approach to knowledge
- Dialogue—co-learners, a mutual learning process
- Reflection and Action (praxis)—the "Action/Reflection Spiral"
- Radical transformation—of communities not only individuals

CHAPTER AND ALLIANCE NEWS

Picnic on Four Tree Island

On a sunny Saturday August 14th afternoon, New Hampshire's Seacoast Alliance sponsored a delightful picnic bash on Portsmouth's Four Tree Island. No dogs allowed, but there were lots of kids and plenty of salads, hotdogs and hamburgers. Members of the three Boston Alliance chapters (North Bridge, Boston/Cambridge, and South Shore) were also there along with other invited "progressives, radicals, liberals and fellow travelers," all enjoying each others' company as well as the festive waterside atmosphere and the potluck meal. Leo birthdays were celebrated with several homemade birthday cakes and song. Best of all, **Doris Granny D Haddock** (her bumper sticker name) showed up and spoke briefly and pointedly of her latest major undertaking – she's bent on winning for New Hampshire Democrats a U.S. Senate seat. In her own words: *Don't worry that I'm too old: I can run circles around those old boys in the Senate (and have). I will simply not allow lobbyists through my Senate door – they can send a letter...My time will not be spent with lobbyists or fundraising, but will be spent with and for the people of New Hampshire, so that we can try a little democracy for a change. Your vote for me is your powerful statement that you've had it with politics-as-usual. Let me be your message!*

---by **Cynthia Ritsher** (who can vouch that a party just for the fun of it is the way to go.)

The Alliance for Democracy had its biennial convention July 20-22 at Simmons College on the Fenway in Boston. Permeating the whole was local, regional, and national organizing, using "popular education" methods led by **Larry Olds** and **Betsy Barnum** of Minnesota. Time will tell whether PopEd is helping AfD develop, but participants were enthusiastic. PopEd derives from the work of **Paolo Freire**, who empowered common folk in Brazil and revolutionized the nation. See page 7, bottom, for his key principles.

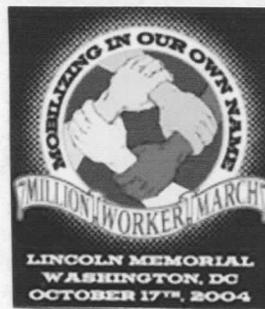
The Boston Social Forum was the event of the season. Attendance exceeded 5000, and proceeds enable the Forum to continue with a small staff including **Susie Husted**, **Jason Pramas**, and **Jonathan Leavitt**. At BCA's August meeting, Jason and **Suren Moodliar** filled us in on BSF's successes, and joined us in discussing prospects. Reaching out to Middle America, now plagued by underemployment, is a major challenge. Established non-governmental organizations tend to be competitive and self-aggrandizing—can they be democratized? **Kucinich** supporters were active at BSF—should the Democratic Party be invited in? Should BSF continue with frequent town-meeting speak-ups and "fishbowls"? Jason et al will call a review meeting including track coordinators later this month.

AfD and its **Water Allies** made a big splash at BSF, fighting water privatization. AfD stalwarts **Ruth Caplan** and **Dave Lewit**, along with **Martha Spiess** (Freeport ME) and **Nancy Price** (Davis CA) will organize water-watch councils throughout New England and eastern NY state during the next 12 months. See info and links at www.waterallies.org

City and town budgeting includes water resources and services, so why not fold water matters into Participatory Budgeting (PB)? **Dave Lewit** and **Gianpaolo Baiocchi**, sociologist at UMass/Amherst, are planning an invitational conference on PB and Water for mid-October, targeting New England activists already involved in related action. Gianpaolo brings direct knowledge of developments in Brazil.

BC Prof. **Charlie Derber** is in town and around the US on a tour promoting his latest book "*Regime Change Begins At Home: Freeing America from Corporate Rule*". Now here's a deal! Get your copy at 50% discount (\$9.98) by phoning 1-800-929-2929 and saying the promotional code "RCBAH". Deal ends Nov 2.

ACTION ALERTS



Join MILLION WORKER MARCH, October 17, Washington, DC. For details, transportation, call Int'l Longshore & Warehouse Union at 617-524-3507.

GET OUT THE SWING VOTE, NH. 18 Sept, and every Sat (10-4) and Sun (11-4). "America Coming Together". Ride to Manchester and other NH towns with Boston group.

For arrangements, call Georgia Hollis-Isman at 617-422-0118 (work) or 413-695-1786 (cell). Or Emily Mintz at 603-296-1408.

JOIN THE BCA

YOU DON'T HAVE TO LIVE IN BOSTON TO LOVE BCA

Please help us as we fight to make a better future for ourselves and our children -- Join the Boston/Cambridge Alliance for Democracy. (Cut out this form and send it to:

Dave Lewit, 271 Dartmouth St. #2h, Boston, MA 02116.)

BOSTON-CAMBRIDGE ALLIANCE for DEMOCRACY PLEDGE

- \$26/Year - "Count me in!"
 \$52/Year - "Contributor" (We need to average this amount.)
 \$104/Year - "Sustainer" (Helping us thrive.)
 \$208/Year - "Community Steward"
 \$500/Year - "Realize the vision!"
 What's fair for YOU? \$ _____

Name : _____ Date: _____

Street, No./Box/Apt: _____

Town and Zip: _____

Phone: Day _____ Night: _____

E-mail: _____

COLOPHON

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