WELCOME TO FRAGMENTS #2

It’s been five years since Fragments #1 was published. The next issue probably won’t take that long, but if it does, I don’t care. I do this for fun, and refuse to let it become a chore, or a job I must accomplish under the pressure of a deadline. I have enough of that in the “work” world.

For the most part Fragments #1 was well received. I thank everyone for the kind words and thoughtful critiques. However, I get the impression that in some cases the purpose and form of Fragments was misunderstood, so I would like to say a few words about what I think Fragments is, and what it is not.

First of all, it is not a dissertation or a scholarly paper. I am not an intellectual or an academician. Even though Fragments deals with social and political issues, I think of it more like poesy than a position paper, more like art than academics. It is meant to appeal to the heart as well as the brain. I make no apologies for contradictions or my propensity for hyperbole. I make no claims of objectivity. Like all products of the irrational human mind, the Fragments point of view is purely subjective. One of its goals is to connect with other subjectivities.

In the researched pieces in this issue I have tried my journalistic best to present accurate information. But facts are always subject to dispute. Facts are important, but I am distrustful of them (and you should be too) because facts are just fragments that we rip from the totality of reality. These “factoids” are commonly used to try to change our beliefs in order to sell us a product or an ideology. This is not a goal of Fragments.

I think there was also a perception that some of the topics touched on in Fragments #1 were dealt with superficially. That may be so, but Fragments is not intended to be a thesis, but a mosaic. The idea is that the various disparate elements should interact, complementing and contradicting each other to build meaning synergistically. By assimilating random bits and pieces of ideas, the reader might realize new connections leading to fresh perspectives and original insights. That’s the theory anyway. ✗

There are no hardcopies of Fragments #1 left. But you can download a PDF version from the Fragments website. You will need Adobe Acrobat or Reader to view the zine. The file can be found at:

http://www.fragmentsweb.org/fourtx/frag1pdf.html

I wrote all the text pieces in this document, except those attributed to someone else. The graphics are mostly composed of clip art or royalty free images. Photographs with credits are the property of the photographers or organizations cited. Please do not reproduce any text or graphics without notifying me or the owners of the material.

Cover: Dorothy Day just before being arrested on a United Farm Workers strike line in 1973. Thanks to Bob Fitch for permission to use this photo.
Fragments #3 will probably be published more quickly than #2, because I have already done some work on it. The theme will be “Strategic Nonviolence,” so it should dovetail nicely with topics explored in this the “Power” issue. Rough drafts of some text pieces can be found on the Fragments Web site:

http://www.fragmentsweb.org

Fragments #3 will include:

- A review of Gene Sharp’s book *Power and Struggle*
- A rather detailed account of civilian resistance to the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968
- A factual account of the 1986 “People Power” revolution in the Philippines
- Thoughts on the myth of innate aggression in humans
- The usual rants, ruminations, hair-brained ideas; plus possible interviews and other fun surprises

If you live in the U.S. you can receive Fragments #3 for free. To get on the list, you must contact me at:

Fragments
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You may have received Fragments #2 in the mail for free. That does not mean you are on the list for #3. I need to hear from you or you may be purged. When you write, provide me with a physical or e-mail address, and keep me updated if it changes. Just before #3 is published, I will try to contact you again to verify your current physical address so you can be placed on the final mailing list.
Power doesn’t really exist—except in our minds.
It is illusory, ghost-like, fleeting.
Power’s only weapon is psychological.
Power can only act through us.
Power seeps into our heads at work, at play, when we sleep.
Its methods are subtle; its influence can be greatest when we think we are most in control of our lives.

Our most personal thoughts come from Power’s diary,
our most original ideas from Power’s brain,
our most rebellious deeds from Power’s playbook.

Power is based on perception, self-image, obfuscation and mystification. On a day-to-day basis, most of us are not controlled by laws, but by habit. We live in a fog, unconsciously and uncritically obeying rules we have had no part in creating, and which do not always serve our interests or the interests of our community. Power is self-hypnosis; it is our very selves used against us.

For rulers to continue ruling it is necessary that those at the bottom of the social ladder not only accept their condition, but eventually lose even the sense of being exploited. Once this psychological process has been achieved the division of society becomes legitimized in people’s minds. The exploited cease to perceive it as something imposed on them from without. The oppressed have internalized their own oppression.

Maurice Brinton
The Irrational in Politics

Power is a chameleon. It constantly changes form and character, depending on how it is wielded and who wields it. It is not good or bad by nature. Power is good when it is dispersed throughout a society, when everyone has some and no one has too much. Power is bad when it is concentrated in a few hands.

Even the professional academic types—political scientists and sociologists—can’t agree on terminology when it comes to power. Therefore, the categories and definitions of power used in this publication are not meant to be authoritative, comprehensive or even consistent. I borrowed many of them from others, and used them in my own way to help organize my thoughts and stimulate original thinking.
Think about what it must have been like to be an early human. You roam the plains in small communal bands. The women gather nuts, berries, roots and bugs for food; the men hunt lizards and other small game. Spirits reside in every rock and tree and animal. Nature is alive.

Nature can be terrifying, bringing violent storms, freezing cold, poisonous insects and dangerous animals. But it can also be bountiful, providing food, shelter and pleasure.

To a small extent, you have control over nature. You have learned to use tools for hunting and cutting. You have learned how to set traps to catch game and build simple shelters against the elements. But nature also controls you, setting the rhythms of your life, bringing the threat of famine and illness.

You perceive yourself as a part of the interconnected web of nature, influencing it and being influenced by it. You are not separate from nature. Every action you take affects nature, and its every act affects you. You don’t set yourself above nature, nor do you consider nature above you. Nature may be more powerful than humans, but it is not All-Powerful. Accordingly, the nature spirits you worship are not omnipotent.

You live in a world of interconnectedness—a junior partner in a great cosmic plan. You perceive power as an interplay, an interaction, and your social system is modeled after this conception of power.

It would never occur to you that one social role could be superior to another, or that a certain talent was more important to the well being of the tribe than another. Even though there are elders in positions of authority, every member of your group is valued for their unique personality and abilities. And the elder leaders of your tribe realize they need your support, just as you need their guidance.
TRANSCENDENT POWER

Now imagine your shock at the revelation of a new idea that is destined to change the world. It was thought up by a group of male hunters who belong to a secret cult. The idea is that of a supreme God: a single spirit that is omnipotent. This God is a terrifying spirit that answers to no one and no thing, that rules over nature, over humans, over other spirits. Judge, jury, executioner—no appeal. Thus is born the idea of absolute power; power that transcends the world, that dominates everything.

Certain people who claim they can communicate with this God now set themselves apart from the rest of the community. They are the priests. They are powerful because they have access to power. They form a class. This is the birth of another new idea: hierarchy.

HISTORY

The rest is history (literally the beginning of history and civilization). Hierarchy means there are the dominators, and there are the dominated.

The cosmic model of God ruling over nature and humans is reproduced in the social model of an elite class ruling over other men and women.

The paradigm propagates. Wars of domination begin to shape history into the bloody struggle we know it to be. State power grows. City-states become nation-states, which become empires.

The ideology of domination and control took another ominous turn in the 17th century with the birth of science. God was dead, but now there were new rulers of nature—human beings. The religion of science and technology is all about domination and control: domination and control of nature, domination and control of other humans.

...it is easy enough to see that certain aspects of the new science would be welcomed by the established powers of the time: the celebration of the mechanical, the tangible, the quantifiable, the utilitarian, the linear, and the divisible, as against the organic, the spiritual, the incalculable, the mysterious, the circular, and the holistic. For the new nationalism that wished to establish its control over all secular matters by immutable laws and to regard its denizens as measurable and manipulable objects, and for the new capitalism that wished to oversee the materialistic and impersonal marketplace and to develop and exploit the new-found colonial territories, the underlying principles of the scientific ideology were obviously ideal.

Raoul Vaneigem
The Revolution of Everyday Life

Kirkpatrick Sale
Dwellers in the Land
RECIPROCITY

When we lived close to nature in egalitarian, matricentric communities, we understood the dynamics of give and take among humans, and between humans and nature. Today we tend to think of power as absolute—flowing one way, from the dominator to the dominated.

We think we can completely dominate nature through our science and technology. But we can't, and our attempts always have unforeseen consequences. We can dam the river, but the torrential rains will eventually come, the dam will break, and the river will wash us all away. We can never fully dominate nature because nature is a part of us—it is who and what we are. Nature lives within us as much as we live within it. All the elements of our highly “advanced” civilization ultimately depend on the natural world.

We may think we are the Wise Rulers of nature, but in fact we are small children, dependent on Mama for our every need.

Likewise, despite appearances to the contrary, the rule of dictators and other elite groups is always weak and unstable. Political power is never absolute as long as the dominated maintain their freedom of will and their will to freedom. Even the most ruthless leader depends on the cooperation and voluntary submission of his subjects.

All power relationships are interactive, mutually modulating, reciprocal.

Nobody, in general, wishes that his influence completely determine the other individual. He rather wants this influence, this determination of the other, to act back upon him. Even the abstract will-to-dominate, therefore, is a case of interaction. This will draws its satisfaction from the fact that the acting or suffering of the other, his positive or negative condition, offers itself to the dominator as the product of his will.

Georg Simmel
The Sociology of Georg Simmel
The most insidious kind of power is power-over. This is the power of domination and control, power that seeks to rule unilaterally.

**Power-over is voracious.**

Power-over takes what’s there; it makes no distinctions between right and wrong.

Power-over must expand or die.

Power-over fills all vacuums, crushes the weak, extends itself wherever it can.

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The idea of control is not the same as the exercise of control. A small child exercises control when it first walks or speaks; animals exercise control when they build nests or dams, when a chimpanzee, say, uses a digging stick. But they do not abstract control itself as a value. To value control, *power-over*, means that any form of control seems a good simply because it is a control. It is valued simply because it exists more than for what it accomplishes or creates.

*Marilyn French*

*Beyond Power*

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Politicians love power-over. They crave the capacity to control the lives of large numbers of people. It is the politician’s job to make us believe that he/she is committed to helping people, or making the world a better place, or carrying out the will of his/her constituency. In fact, a true politician has but one goal: acquisition of more power. Power for power’s sake. Power for the thrill of it. Love of power to a politician is an end unto itself, like the love of art or music.

Most politicians are corrupted with the lust for power-over, and deserve our utmost contempt. Fortunately, in the U.S. anyway, everyone hates politicians (except of course the elites for whom the politicians work). This is a good thing. Perhaps it is an indication that we are beginning to understand the poisonous nature of power-over.

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The development of power-over initiated the founding of civilization. Our present problems have their roots in the defining characteristics of civilization itself: domination and control. In the last century, two trends—the accelerating sophistication of technology, and increasingly ubiquitous global organization (themselves products of the domination mentality)—have given Power the tools to dominate and control as never before.

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...political power, as an institution, ought to be surrounded with extraordinary suspicion, with precautionary measures, and with the most stringent vigilance that civil society can muster. For those who possess it are swept by an insatiable passion for more, and are tempted to vie with others who have it, until they come to think of history as only a poker game of kings and presidents in which people are no more than the playing cards.

*George Konrád*

*Antipolitics*
When people band together within a community to take control of some aspect of their lives, we can call it social power. Social power is people power. It is the wielding of power collectively within small groups. It is power-with rather than power-over.

Social power is necessarily community-based. When social power begins to coalesce into large organizations, it tends to create hierarchy and leaders. Leaders become politicians and wield political power. This is bad, because power is exercised on behalf of others and over others.

In contrast to political power, which is concentrated power, social power is dispersed throughout a community. The goal for our society should be to maximize social power and minimize power-over. The more power is diffused throughout a society, the more freedom there is for everyone. Social power opposes power-over and weakens it.
Our understanding of power has been shaped by the mechanistic worldview which sees power as an attribute of limited quantity which is distributed unevenly to isolated individuals. Power is something which someone or some group has. It is something which can be seized, taken, given, or “put in its place…”

This static view of power emphasizes the separation between those who “have” power (the power-full) and those who don’t (the power-less). Because there is only so much power to go around, one can only have more power by taking it away from someone else (a win-lose situation where their gain is another’s loss), or by persuading those with power to give some of it up (in which case they continue to depend on the goodwill of the powerful who can always “take it back”). And of course those with more power are free to use it as they wish, constrained only by their own morality. Although we need to understand the workings of power in our society, analyses which focus solely on the ways in which the powerful exercise “power-over” others contribute to our own sense of powerlessness and victimization. It gives us the sense that domination is so total that resistance is futile.

A more dynamic understanding of power focuses on the connections between the individuals involved. Power, as a relation, flows from “sender” to “receiver.”

**The effectiveness of the exercise of power by the “sender” depends on the degree to which the “receivers” consent to the relation. Orders, to be effective, must be obeyed.**

In this view, power is neither positive nor negative. The form it takes depends on the nature of the relationships through which it flows.

Starhawk in *Truth Or Dare: Encounters with Power, Authority and Mystery* (Harper & Row, 1990) distinguishes between three forms of power: power-over, power-from-within, and power-with. The exercise of “power-over” ranges from the overt use of force and violence to more subtle forms of persuasion. For “power-over” to flow effectively, there has to be some element of submissiveness, dependency, or fear on the part of the receivers of this power. In exchange for our obedience we get that which is not directly or easily available to us—we get that which we fear losing. In agreeing to this exchange we fail to realize that the powerful need what we agree to give them (our labor, resources, approval, etc.). Our consent is also obtained through mechanisms which persuade us through the manufacture of a “truth” which serves the powerful. This “truth” defines the ways in which we should “see” and “be” in the world. There are no alternatives. Other truths, other ways of seeing and being are overshadowed, devalued and discredited. But the power to define, like all power, is a relation. It depends for its effectiveness on the existence of others who are willing to “believe” their truth. To accept this truth is to deny our own experiences, strengths and power.

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**...the structure of reality is that the universe is entirely subjective to the individual. Knowledge is simply arbitrary.**

Mythic information society uses to program its population in order to perpetuate itself. This programming hides reality from us by twisting our observations around to fit its own view of the principles and structure of creation. As a result, we become further and further out of sync with reality, having to redefine, reinterpret, and edit more of our own memories to accommodate society’s false view of creation.

William J. Murray
*Anarchic Harmony*
As individuals, we exercise “power-from-within” when we choose to act from our inner sense of integrity and “truth.” The strength of “power-from-within” does not come from external authority nor from possession of the means of coercion. It emerges from within us. It comes from our willingness to act from, and to protect, the deep bonds that connect us with each other and with the Earth. It is “power-from-within” that gives us the strength to speak out and to join with others in withdrawing our consent for relations of “power-over.”

As receivers of “power-over,” we have the option of refusing to act as a vehicle for the exercise of someone else’s power. It is at the point of reception that we are presented with the opportunity of refusal—the exercise of our power-from-within.

It is in our willingness and readiness to exercise this power that the authority of “power-over” is weakened. It is when the number of individuals who are prepared to exercise their power-from-within increases that “power-over” begins its conversion to “power-with.”

In joining with others we exercise “power-with”—the collective side of “power-from-within.” “Power-with” is “the power not to command, but to suggest and be listened to, to begin something and see it happen. The source of power-with is the willingness of others to listen to our ideas. We could call that willingness respect, not for a role, but for each unique person.” This form of power is exercised within the limits of community—the net of relations which sanctions the ordered use of our individual and collective powers. It is a fluid, constructive and creative form of leadership which “retains its strength only through restraint. It affirms, shapes, and guides a collective decision—but it cannot enforce its will on the group or push it in a direction contrary to community desires.” To do so would be to exert “power-over”—the form of power normally exercised within hierarchical positions of authority.

The linking of “power-from-within” and “power-with” offers us a clear alternative to the dominant form of “power-over.” It is through the exercise of these powers that we recover our capacity to act, to resist, to create.
Power over nature is a pillar of western civilization. It is an ideology established thousands of years ago, and is so pervasive that we take it as a “given,” a natural fact. The first page of the Bible clearly sets out our domination of the earth as a God-given right:

God blessed them, saying: “Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and all the living things that move on the earth.”

Science is the ultimate refinement of this ideology. As science and technology advance, our ability to “subdue” the earth has steadily increased over the centuries, and now our power over nature has become extreme.

Today we feel that natural resources, animals, outer space, and even other cultures exist only to dominate and exploit for private gain.

Instead of “power-over” nature, we should strive to practice “power-with” nature. When we tamper with the Earth there are limits we must observe if we are to avoid certain destruction of our environment and our selves. ✗
Animals have been embedded in cultures throughout the world. Some thinkers, such as the late Paul Shepard, believe that when we use animals symbolically, as in art and poetry, we are using animals as representatives of the natural world. It has been this way for millennia. When the temple friezes of ancient cultures depicted their soldier-warrior hero-kings slaughtering lions, they were symbolically conquering the earth, because the lion as the top-chain predator symbolized much of nature around him.

If what Shepard and other people believe is true—that animals are this important to us and have been throughout evolution, and that they’re indelibly imprinted in our brains and our minds—we must ask ourselves about the repercussions of that.

We have to think about what our treatment of animals is doing to us as human beings.

We need to take a look at what has happened to us as we have moved from a primal and tribal existence to become what we call "modern" human beings with our so-called "civilizations." This process has been going on for about eight or nine thousand years, beginning roughly with the advent of agriculture and the rise of the cities, sophisticated trade, and written language. Recognizable history covers only the last four or five thousand years of it.

We’ve reached such an advanced stage of civilization that we’re wondering what we’re doing to the earth and to ourselves, now that we’ve wiped out many of the most spectacular animals. These animals, such as the tiger, are very impressive to people. They are deeply imprinted into the cultures of indigenous peoples. So when the tiger is gone in Asia and the elephants from Africa, the human cultures and societies there will be ripped from their roots. It won’t be Africa. It won’t be Asia. It will just be a place sterilized of the animals who really gave something to human lives.
“ADULT-ERATION”

We’ve “adult-erated” ourselves. What has happened during this long process is that we have reversed our relationship with animals. Whereas we used to see them as powers, deities, spirits, and as brothers and sisters, as a result of several thousand years of agriculture and mastery over nature, we have formed a wholly different relationship. Once we started using animals as slaves, as domestic livestock, and started eradicating all animal life around our villages and cities in the ancient Middle East and the other centers of “civilization,” we had to reinvent our relationship with animals.

When people reinvent their relationship with the earth they destroy the old mythology and replace it with a new one. They do the same with religions. Before agriculture we had a situation where men and women were more or less equal, animals were important, and we felt a part of the natural world. Several thousand years later, however, we’ve dammed up rivers to make irrigation systems, clear-cut forests to produce cropland, and exterminated the top-chain predators so that we can have livestock. And we have had to have new mythologies and new stories, to reinvent ourselves as agri-cultures living in mastery over nature.

We get a glimpse of this in some of the early stories in the Bible, which were beginning to be written down about 1000 to 800 BCE, but were much older than that. There you see the destruction of beliefs not only in the power of animals but the power of female deities as well. Across the world, emerging agricultural-period religions replaced the old stone age religions that had animal-centered spirits and deities. This process has culminated in our culture: what we call Western, patriarchal culture, which is a nature-dominating, human-supremacist culture.

RITUALS

What does all this mean to us today? It means we really think we’re entitled to master the world. It means we really think we deserve to own animals and nature and treat them as slaves.

We’re using the ancient power of animals to demonstrate our mastery over them. We have rituals to do this: bullfights, circuses, rodeos, zoos, hunting and the like. These are ways in which we remind ourselves of our power over animals, who in turn represent our power over nature. Now all this is not consciously done. It is an accumulation of centuries of attitudes and experiences with animals.
Take the elephant. There’s probably no more dignified and powerful an animal than a great gray elephant. But when you see the animal in the circus, it’s a clown, a buffoon. And this, whether coincidentally or not, is the great treat for children: we take them to the circus. We “adulterate” them.

The rodeo is another example. The rodeo evolved as a way for people to celebrate their mastery over animals. They do this by going to a public place where they have comfortable seats, soft drinks, and popcorn and sit and watch people torture animals. They watch people twist the bulls’ tails and wrestle them to the ground, drawing upon the power of those animals. Wild horses and wild bulls are some of the most powerful animals in the universe. That’s why we see them in the constellations and why we name so many of the powers in the sky after animal forms. The rodeo helps people feel in a very visceral way how the West was won, and how macho cowboy values have wrestled that place into civilization.

Today, more and more people are trying to challenge these ideas, using every discipline there is—philosophy, science, anthropology and history—to undo this poisonous sleep that we’ve induced upon ourselves that’s leading us towards destruction. But animal advocates ought to be careful when they look at these things, and not just attack them on their animal rights grounds and the suffering they cause to animals, but also their effects on humans. The activist Sue Pressman once reminded me that all this torturing and display of animals in circuses and zoos is to nature education and wildlife education what pornographic films are to sex education.

If we want to teach positive values about the natural world and our belonging in it, then we don’t want to take children to see things that show over and over again our macho power.
JASON

All the campus radicals sat in one room. There were three of us. It was 1971—the Vietnam War was raging and Dick Nixon was in the White House. We were having a meeting because Jason heard Vice President Spiro T. Agnew was coming to town to give a speech, and of course an event like that called for a demonstration.

Susan, Jason and I were students at an exclusive, very conservative university in a small southern city. Susan was quiet and shy; she rarely spoke. If you could get her to talk though, you could tell she was real smart.

But it was Jason who was the natural leader of the group. Bright, mischievous and stubborn, he was the most passionately idealistic person I had ever met.

He was a philosophy major and his dad was a religion professor at the university.

Jason told us he had gotten a call from Gary Thomas, the city police attorney, who said he heard we were planning a demonstration. We found this a little disturbing because no one else was supposed to know. We joked that it was easy to keep tabs on all the rabble-rousers in town when there were only three of us. Gary told Jason that all our rights would be protected at our demo. He said we could stand anywhere and chant any slogans we wanted during Agnew’s speech.

The rebel undoubtedly demands a certain degree of freedom for himself; but in no case, if he is consistent, does he demand the right to destroy the existence and the freedom of others. He humiliates no one. The freedom he claims, he claims for all; the freedom he refuses, he forbids everyone to enjoy. He is not only the slave against the master, but also man against the world of master and slave. Therefore, thanks to rebellion, there is something more in history than the relation between mastery and servitude. Unlimited power is not the only law.

Albert Camus
The Rebel

Jason thought Gary was a pretty cool guy. He had been in Gary’s office once and was impressed that he had a quote by Camus hanging on the wall. But we all wondered if Gary hadn’t called to tell us about our rights so much as to get information about what we were planning to do.

Our demo planning meeting took place in an elegant lounge at the girl’s dorm. We sprawled on the plush carpet, hashing out ideas. The focus of our demonstration would be the Vietnam War, of course. We wanted to pass out physical symbols that would make the War real to people. We decided to print play money that would represent tax dollars being wasted on the War. Jason came up with the idea of handing out small pieces of barbed wire to represent the concentration camps in South Vietnam (our ally). Each piece of wire would have a tag attached explaining its meaning. To publicize the demo, Susan would put up posters around campus, while Jason and I would use our programs on the university radio station to reach the wider community.
The day Spiro Agnew came to town was sunny and warm. The police had blocked off some streets downtown for the event. Thousands of people gathered to hear the vice president speak, but only about twenty-five showed up for our demonstration. Jason had painted his face with clown white makeup and was wearing a tie-dyed T-shirt. He was a bizarre sight with his tall, thin body and tangled waist-length hair.

Our rights promised by the police attorney were nowhere in evidence now that the U.S. Secret Service was in charge. We were relegated to the very back of the crowd. A blue circle of very stern looking city police officers all but surrounded us, separating us from everyone else. Men in dark suits and dark sunglasses stood nearby, talking furtively into their sleeves. Sharpshooters peered down at us from the roofs of buildings.

Within a few minutes the police collected all our play money. They didn't like our barbed wire idea either, and began to confiscate the pieces of wire, claiming they were dangerous weapons that we might presumably use to assassinate the honorable vice president. While Jason was handing over his handful of barbed wire to a short pot-bellied officer he suddenly had an idea. “Wait a minute,” he said, “this is my property. I want a receipt.”

The cop gave Jason a look of disgust. Everyone held their breath and watched as Jason stood there defiantly, his lanky frame towering over the angry policeman. The cop's jaw clenched, and for a moment I thought there might be violence. Then he took a deep breath and pulled out a pad of paper. “What's your name,” he asked.

“Thomas Jefferson, sir,” said Jason. Again, there was a tense pause.

*The cop glanced up at the sky for a long moment; whether looking to God for patience or the snipers for vengeance, I could not tell.*

Then he began to write: “Seven pieces of barbed wire belonging to Thomas Jefferson.”

Immediately everyone grabbed a single piece from our stock of barbed wire and lined up to turn it in to the cop. For the next twenty minutes the cop wrote property receipts for the likes of Richard Nixon, Jane Fonda, Jimi Hendrix and Porky Pig.

The tension continued with the police. Our chants were drowned out by the crowd and the PA system. Then we were told we couldn't chant anymore. Our signs were confiscated. A rumor circulated among the demonstrators that the cops were preparing to make arrests, and when a signal was given they would charge, billy clubs swinging.

But no arrests were made and the speech finally ended. The crowd began to disperse, the cops got on their big blue bus, and even the rooftop snipers vanished. We stood around chatting, feeling vaguely dissatisfied and screwed over.

I fingered the property receipt in my pocket. “I think we should reclaim our barbed wire,” I joked. We all laughed. Then Jason got a mischievous gleam in his eye. “You want to? Let's go.”

So Susan and I piled into Jason's Volkswagen Beetle and we headed for police headquarters in the City Hall building a few blocks away.

“We want our property back, please,” Jason told the lady at the counter. “We have receipts.”

“I'll get someone,” said the woman. She went to a desk near the back of the office and picked up a phone.

After about five minutes the chief of police showed up. He was a small wiry man with a red leathery face. “What's the problem here?” he said with a heavy North Carolinian drawl.
“An officer confiscated our property at the demonstration and we want to claim it,” said Jason.

“I’m sorry I can’t do that,” said the chief. “Now I’m gonna ask y’all to leave.” He hated Jason. You could see it in his face.


“I don’t have time for this.” The chief’s face was getting redder.

“This is America,” yelled Jason. “You can’t do this. We have rights.”

**The police chief looked very distressed. “If y’all don’t leave right now y’all’ll be arrested,” he said flatly. His voice had a tone of finality. This was a man who was used to having his commands obeyed.**

Jason was really worked up now. Tears began streaming down his face, smearing his clown white. “How can you people work here,” Jason shouted to the office workers who sat stunned, watching in horror as the drama unfolded. “How can you work for this fascist institution?” As Jason continued to rave, I looked out at row after row of gray-haired ladies frozen in front of typewriters, their faces filled with uncomprehending disbelief.

Susan and I were both relieved to see Jason finally turn to go. Outside in the hall I could see how enraged he really was. His skinny body shook and his voice cracked as we discussed what to do next. It was the arrogance of Power that had him upset. To Jason every injustice, no matter how small, epitomized all the injustice in the world. In this trivial incident he saw the powerful contemptuously trampling on the rights of the powerless. To him it was the same mentality that kept black people in poverty; the same spirit of superiority and arrogance that led to the war in Vietnam.

But power is a relative thing, especially in a small town. “Let’s see if the mayor’s in,” said Jason finally.

It turned out that Jason knew the mayor. Dr. Williams was a part-time speech professor at the university and sometimes had dinner with Jason’s family. We straggled into his office with our colorful T-shirts, patched jeans, and long scraggly hair.

The receptionist was a pretty blonde woman not much older than we were. She wanted to know who was asking to see the mayor. “Do you have an appointment?” she asked abruptly. “No? Well I’ll see if he’s available.” She smiled smugly as she picked up the phone and purred “There’s a Jason Brown here to see you Mr. Mayor...Oh...Yes sir!” Looking a little surprised, she put the phone down and studied us more closely, like we were possible celebrities—rock stars maybe. “He’ll be with you in a minute,” she said with slightly more deference.

We plopped down in the expensive leather chairs to wait. Susan played nervously with her stringy brown hair, twisting it into little knots. I looked around the reception room, slightly dazed. The dark paneled walls were covered with plaques and pictures of people shaking hands.

After a few minutes we were shown into the inner office. The mayor jumped up from behind his big desk and shook all our hands. “How’s your folks doing, Jason?” he asked. Dr. Williams was plump and jovial, with a loud hearty laugh. He and Jason talked about family stuff for a few minutes but finally, when there was a pause, the mayor suddenly got serious and said: “I heard you people caused quite a commotion out there today.” We tittered nervously. “So what can I do for you?” he asked.

Jason explained that the police chief refused to return our pieces of barbed wire, and threatened to have us arrested. “I’ll take care of it,” said the mayor. “I’ll just give the police attorney a call. Anything else I can do for you?”
“Yes,” said Jason. “Can you stop the war?” We all laughed way too loud, more out of relief than from Jason’s lame joke.

A minute later Gary strolled into the office. He was casually dressed and had a big friendly smile. The mayor explained the situation to him. “No problem,” said Gary, “I’ll get your property back. By the way, I’m teaching a class of rookie officers. They were out there today at your demonstration and seem to think you people are some kind of monsters. How would you like to come talk to them so we can try to get a dialog going? I think it would be good for them.” We all shrugged. Why not?

There were about twenty good ol’ boys in the rookie class and maybe one black guy. They were young—really just kids like us. The discussion quickly turned to the War. Most of them parroted the usual government justifications—we needed to fight communism, defend freedom, obey our leaders, etc. Trying to get through to most of them was frustrating because they did not seem to be thinking about what they were saying—they were just regurgitating the government line. A couple of them, however, seemed genuinely engaged in the discussion, and I got the impression they were arguing so vehemently in favor of the War because they were having doubts about their own positions. On the other hand, a few of the rookies just sat there silently, glaring at us with evident hate in their eyes.

When we left, one of the rookie cops followed us out, still continuing the discussion about the War. He followed us all the way out to our car. For a minute I thought he might climb in Jason’s Volkswagen and go home with us. But finally he shook our hands and left. We all felt good. There had been some communication which, after all, had been our goal from the beginning.

Looking back, I wonder how we appeared to the rookies, the police chief and the mayor. Our rebellion must have seemed somewhat comical. There was never any real danger because, in reality, the Power we were fighting accepted us and embraced us as affluent, privileged, snotty-nosed college kids. The rookies, on the other hand, seemed to be mostly simple working class types—I can imagine them living in trailer parks on the outskirts of town before they got their cop jobs. I wonder if some of the animosity we felt from them had less to do with the Vietnam War and more to do with our superior attitudes.

By April 1973, all U.S. combat troops were withdrawn from Vietnam. Later that year, Spiro T. Agnew pleaded no contest to federal income tax evasion charges and resigned as vice president of the United States.

In the middle of all this the police chief walked into the room. His red face was now white and his shoulders sagged. He handed each of us a piece of barbed wire, and then mumbled an apology in front of the class.

“I’m sorry we refused to return your property. It won’t happen again.” Then he turned and shuffled out of the room with his head down. We all felt a little embarrassed.
It usually takes a mass movement to overthrow a government, but amazing changes can be initiated by small groups, or even individuals. Systems that outwardly appear monolithic and invulnerable can be threatened by seemingly insignificant acts. A case in point is the Eastern European dissidents who terrified their Communist overlords in the 1970’s and 1980’s.

**CHARTER 77**

Charter 77 was a petition drawn up by a few Czechoslovakian writers and intellectuals. It demanded that the Communist government of Czechoslovakia recognize some basic human rights. Charter 77 was hardly a radical document. Most of the rights it sought were already guaranteed by the Czechoslovakian Constitution and the Helsinki Accords, which the Czechoslovakian government had signed.

Few people had the courage to sign Charter 77. In a country of 15 million, less than two thousand Czechoslovakian citizens signed it, and most of them signed in 1989 when the Communist regime was nearing collapse. Many of the Charter signers were apolitical. Many acted alone and were not members of any dissident groups. Some still believed in Socialism. Most were just ordinary people with no agendas, no axes to grind, no motivation other than to live their lives with integrity.

Yet the government expended enormous resources harassing the Charter signers. They were isolated and ostracized. Their meetings were banned. Some were followed, interrogated, forced to work at menial jobs, or put in jail.

**The dissidents discovered their lives were their most powerful weapons. Living as if they were free had enormous consequences.**

With a simple act of defiance like signing a petition, a dissident was able to invoke an extreme response from the regime. This overreaction revealed the government’s fear and exposed its vulnerability.

Dissent has a momentum of its own—it is easy to get the second hundred thousand people to a demonstration; the hard part is recruiting the first ten. In Chile, where I lived for four years, I met many people who said that in the years of economic boom after General Pinochet’s coup, if just one other person had expressed opposition, they would have begun to ask questions, to open their eyes to the tortures and the murders. “But no one did,” said one man who went along. “And after a while, you think to yourself: ‘I must be wrong.’”

Tina Rosenberg
*The Haunted Land*

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Playwright Václav Havel in the late 1970’s. A leader of the Charter 77 group, Havel spent over three and a half years in prison. He is now president of the Czech Republic.
THE FALL

When Mikhail Gorbachev came to power in the Soviet Union, he saw the inevitability of certain reforms within his Communist Empire. These policy shifts inadvertently triggered strong reactions in Russia and the Communist Bloc countries of Eastern Europe, as the seeds planted by the dissidents during long years of struggle and oppression began to germinate. People began to stand up and deny the legitimacy of their Communist governments—one by one at first, then by the hundreds, then by the hundreds of thousands. In the space of a few months, as the tacit public support that propped up the power structure evaporated, Communist governments across Eastern Europe which had been firmly in control for over forty years suddenly began to fall like dominoes.

In December 1989 it was Czechoslovakia’s turn. Shortly after the overthrow of Communism in East Germany and Bulgaria, demonstrations and increasing unrest forced the resignation of Czech president Gustav Husák. A non-Communist coalition government took over.

It is...becoming evident—and I think that is an experience of an essential and universal importance—that a single, seemingly powerless person who dares to cry out the word of truth and to stand behind it with all his person and all his life, ready to pay a high price, has, surprisingly, greater power, though formally disfranchised, than do thousands of anonymous voters. It is becoming evident that even in today’s world, and especially on this exposed rampart where the wind blows most sharply, it is possible to oppose personal experience and the natural world to the ‘innocent’ power and to unmask its guilt, as the author of The Gulag Archipelago has done. It is becoming evident that truth and morality can provide a new starting point for politics and can, even today, have an undeniable political power. The warning voice of a single brave scientist, besieged somewhere in the provinces and terrorized by a goaded community, can be heard over continents and addresses the conscience of the mighty of this world more clearly than entire brigades of hired propagandists can, though speaking to themselves. It is becoming evident that wholly personal categories like good and evil still have their unambiguous content and, under certain circumstances, are capable of shaking the seemingly unshakeable power with all its army of soldiers, policemen and bureaucrats. It is becoming evident that politics by no means need remain the affair of professionals and that one simple electrician with his heart in the right place, honouring something that transcends him and free of fear, can influence the history of his nation.

Václav Havel
“Politics and Conscience”
From the book Living in Truth

THE POWER OF TRUTH

To survive, Power must create its own consciousness, its own system of beliefs. Truth is the enemy of Power. Any act that challenges the false premises that Power’s world is constructed upon is a threat to Power.

Power craves order. Chaos is the enemy of Power. Any act, no matter how innocuous it may seem on the surface, that disturbs the smooth-running social engine is a threat to Power.

The committed resistance of one person, whether acknowledged or not by official historians, has the potential to set off seismic waves that can echo down throughout history.

Those in power are frightened by the rebel, the non-conformist. They know that even small acts of resistance can have unforeseen consequences. Power’s Palace of Illusion is built on shaky ground that is always subject to destabilization and avalanche.
Salvador Allende was elected president of Chile in 1970. He was a Socialist. Chileans who were wealthy and powerful did not like him. Neither did the U.S. corporations that did business in Chile, like ITT, Anaconda Copper and Kennecott. They were frightened by Allende’s concern for the workers and the poor. They were afraid Allende might nationalize their facilities, support worker’s unions, and stop the exploitation of Chile’s natural resources.

Because U.S. corporations didn’t like Allende, neither did the U.S. government. The Nixon White House tried to isolate Chile financially. The CIA spent millions of dollars sowing chaos, trying to disrupt Allende’s plans. They channeled money to violent fascist groups, bribed politicians and the media to oppose Allende’s programs, and financed opposition politician’s campaigns. The CIA instigated strikes, terrorist attacks and assassinations in Chile.

The CIA’s work finally paid off in September 1973 when the Chilean military, led by General Augusto Pinochet, staged a successful coup d’etat during which Allende was killed. Pinochet then cracked down hard on leftists, unions, human rights groups and other political opponents. Tens of thousands of Chileans were arrested, killed and forced into exile.

With the help of the CIA Pinochet set up his own terrorist/intelligence agency—DINA. 

DINA’s goal was to eliminate unions and other dissident elements, making the country safe for the development of “pure capitalism.” DINA terrorized the population using arrests, torture and “disappearances.”

General Pinochet did not confine his terrorist tactics to Chile’s borders. All over the world there were Chileans living in exile who represented a threat to Pinochet’s power. General Carlos Prats, a former Allende Defense Minister who remained sympathetic to the cause, was writing a book about the Chilean government while exiled in Argentina. In September 1974 he and his wife were assassinated by a car bomb placed by DINA agents. Bernardo Leighton was a Chilean Christian Democrat living in Rome who wanted to set up a parallel government in exile. In September 1975 he and his wife were shot and seriously wounded by an unknown gunman. Now it was September 1976 and Pinochet wanted more victims to help celebrate the third anniversary of his coup.
**ORLANDO LETELIER**

Orlando Letelier had been a high-ranking official in the Allende government. After the coup he spent a year in one of Pinochet’s many concentration camps before being ejected from Chile. In 1975 he began working for the Institute for Policy Studies, a left-wing think tank in Washington, DC. The position at IPS gave Letelier the opportunity to travel the world, lobbying against investment in Chile and encouraging countries to institute sanctions against the Pinochet regime.

On September 21, 1976, Orlando Letelier drove to work along with two other IPS employees—Michael Moffitt and his wife Ronni.

**As the car entered Sheridan Circle, only a few blocks from the White House, it exploded. The lower part of Letelier’s body was blown off.**

He died instantly. Flying metal fragments ripped open Ronni Moffitt’s carotid artery, filling her lungs with blood. She died a short time later. Michael Moffitt, who was in the back seat, was only slightly injured.

DINA had struck again with a car bomb. Pinochet’s arrogance—carrying out a terrorist attack in the capital city of his most important ally—must have shocked even his most loyal supporters in the U.S.

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**FUNERAL**

I was living in Washington DC in 1976 when Orlando Letelier was murdered, so I was able to participate in a hastily organized protest funeral march. The procession was to begin in a small plaza and end up at the cathedral where the Letelier/Moffitt funeral service was being held. I couldn’t believe how many people showed up on that sunny September afternoon—there were thousands. It surprised me that so many people even knew who Letelier was.

As we marched slowly through the streets of Washington, the mood was solemn and defiant. We walked through Sheridan Circle past the spot where Letelier’s car had exploded. It was scattered with flowers left by the marchers. Occasionally the crowd would chant back and forth:

“Compañero Orlando Letelier.”
“Presente.”
“Ahora.”
“Y Siempre.”

As we marched, dark clouds rolled in. By the time we got to the cathedral the sky was black and angry. They had public address speakers set up outside for people who could not get into the service. Hundreds of protesters gathered in front of the church, standing in silence while eulogies were spoken. Halfway through, a light rain began to fall.

No one left.
A shiver went down my spine. It was a defining moment in my young life. A feeling of power and destiny washed over me, as what seemed like a great truth revealed itself. I saw that those who rule could manipulate and intimidate, butcher and bomb, but as long as there were brave committed people like these to defy them, their command could never be absolute. Standing there in that hushed crowd with a lump in my throat and the cold rain washing down my face, I knew with moral certainty that standing up and speaking the truth was always the right thing to do, because it strikes at the heart of Power. I knew that putting your life on the line, like Letelier did, unleashes forces against which no dictator can stand for long.
CONVICTIONS

Amazingly (given the links to the CIA and other U.S. government agencies), some of the people responsible for Letelier’s death were tried and convicted in the United States. Michael Townly, who was born in the United States but lived in Chile, was the DINA agent who coordinated the assassination. He was given a reduced sentence of ten years in return for testifying against his Cuban accomplices. Townly only served five years in prison before being released into the witness protection program. Two of the anti-Communist Cubans who helped with the bombing received life terms, and another received eight years.

STRUGGLING TOWARD DEMOCRACY

During the seventeen years Pinochet ruled, he worked tirelessly to keep the opposition down. To instill terror in the population, different tactics were tried at different times—long-term detentions in camps, random interrogations and torture, disappearances, selective assassinations, death threats. But the opposition would not go away.

In 1990 Pinochet ceded power to a democratically elected government. But he remained as commander in chief of the armed forces, a powerful position in a country where the military has a major influence. Then in 1998 he gave up his post as head of the military to become a permanent senator for life, a position guaranteed by the Constitution he drafted while president.

CHILE TODAY

Today Chilean “democracy” operates under the watchful eye of the military. (Under Pinochet’s Constitution, the military appoints one-fifth of Chile’s senators.) Pinochet’s “pure capitalism” has given Chile one of Latin America’s most thriving economies, but wealth is restricted to a small group. One-third of the Chilean population lives in poverty.

In 1998 Senator Pinochet was arrested in Great Britain after British authorities received a request from Spain to have him extradited. Spain wanted to charge him with genocide, terrorism and murdering Spanish citizens in Chile. But after spending 16 months under house arrest, Pinochet was ruled mentally unfit to stand trial and released. Now, prosecutors in Chile are exploring loopholes in the ex-dictator’s immunity, and steps are being taken to have Pinochet tried for criminal acts committed during his long reign of terror.
Institutional power is the power of the government, the churches, the corporations. Corporations in particular wield enormous power over our lives. They control how we spend our working day and how we spend our leisure time. Through the media they control what we consume, how we are entertained, and how we think.

Institutions may seem permanent, monolithic, omnipotent and hyper-rational. They may appear to be invulnerable to any attempts to overthrow them, change them, or mitigate their influence.

But institutions are not machines made of steel. Even the most powerful institution is nothing more than a community of workers—ordinary flesh and blood people. And ordinary people are stupid, incompetent, and irrational. Most hate their jobs and many hate the institutions they work for. Ordinary people are jealous of their superiors in the institutional hierarchy and contemptuous of their inferiors. Ordinary people can also be heroic, stubborn, non-conformist and moral. They are often willing to speak out and stand up for what they believe is right.

The leaders of large corporations are always rich. They often surround themselves with sycophants and portray themselves as god-like—omniscient and infallible—like the institutions they run. But managers too are just ordinary people, with all the usual human flaws and inconsistencies. Overwhelmed by data, they make irrational decisions based on gut feelings. They spend money on inefficient technology just because it is flashy or sexy. They take advice from experts who know nothing. They hire incompetent people because they themselves are too incompetent to know better. Just like ordinary people they are vengeful and money grubbing. They can also be ethical and caring.

Far from being rational, smooth-running machines, large institutions bumble and stumble along, wallowing in inefficiency, waste and disastrous miscalculations. They are riddled with cracks, weaknesses, vulnerabilities and contradictions. In fact, the only thing that sustains them is their illusion of permanence. Their lifeblood is the tacit support we give them.

All institutions exist only because we believe in them and live our lives in compliance with their demands.
Personal power is the ability to manipulate or exercise some measure of control over a small group of acquaintances. Personal power is isolated, self-centered and self-indulgent. It is ego-power that serves the interests of the individual rather than the community. By itself it does not change the world or engage history.

The quest for personal power is pervasive in our society. When women wear sexy clothes and flirt, they want to feel some degree of power over men. When I see men driving around the city in those huge off-road vehicles with giant tires, I wonder what they are compensating for. Are they short? Have their wives left them for other men? Do they have small penises? Maybe. They want to feel powerful, to be above everyone else, to be feared or admired.

Isolated within a competitive society, laboring long hours at boring jobs for low wages, we feel powerless, and must constantly battle to maintain our self-esteem and self-respect. So we grab for what little we can get. Personal power is something we all want because these days most of us have so little political and social power.

We design our lives to compensate for feelings of powerlessness.

The quest for personal power explains much of the bizarre behavior we see in the early twenty-first century.

Another aspect of personal power is the use of inter-personal violence. This kind of power can be easily purchased by anyone for the price of a handgun. There is no easy answer to the problem of inter-personal violence except the threat of greater counter-violence, which is no answer at all. The hard answer is that we need to redesign our social system so people feel they are empowered members of a community, with real control over their lives. People need the opportunity to develop self-esteem and self-respect, and they need to be treated with dignity and respect by others.

When the jackpot gets big, people jam the liquor stores in California to buy lottery tickets, hoping to be the next millionaire winner. The single-minded quest for wealth that pervades our culture can be explained partially by the fact that money can translate into personal power. People know that buying expensive sports cars or the latest high-tech gadgets can sometimes give them more control, more respect, more power.
There are three things I love about Stan. The first is that he drives a Jeep, my favorite vehicle, and we often drive down to the arboretum or out to the park in the summer with the top off. We walk or sit around and talk the whole time and it's pretty fun just to go drive, get a coffee and just shoot the shit. The second thing that I love is that he will drink coffee at all. I got hooked when I was a wage slave working in the basement of Whirley's Drug Store packaging glittering, toxic mountains of little pills for the psychiatric patients at Windsor Hospital up the hill. The only drugs I ever ingested were aspirin and Nescafe instant coffee with Cremora and about 45 pink packets of Sweet 'n' Low. I've since weaned myself of all but the coffee and milk parts. And Stan is the only person I know under the age of 40 who will go to Arabica and drink the good stuff (I'm talking fresh-ground, steamy café au lait here) with me. He and I are often the only ones there (and it's crowded) who are not beret-wearing, philosophy-reading longhairs. He also tolerates my extreme measures to procure a table. ("Pardon me, Patchouli, but is that Ram Dass over there in the clove smoking section? You better go check.") The third reason to love Stan is that he always travels with a periodic table.

In 1982, it is no small feat to find anyone under the age of my parents who likes to drink coffee. At seventeen, I am an early addict and I'm not after some sloppy pot of Chock Full o' Nuts either. Although I usually drink black coffee with a little milk (because it's all we have around our paltry pantry), I really love café au lait or cappuccino. I remember the first time I had one was in a restaurant where I was trying to look continental and supersophisticated, so instead of a regular coffee, I ordered, in my best French II accent—Mme. Aube would be proud—a café au lait. And it was even better and more sophisticated than I expected, strong and brown with the steamed milk smooth over the bitter bite. I've craved them ever since and the only enlightened person I know who will undertake the coffee-seeking mission with me is Stan Hanson.
Where most kids would have posters of some teeny-bikini babe with global warming bazookas or some sports mongrel with snazzy hair and a football or something, Stan keeps a gigantic, chemistry-classroom-quality periodic table on his bedroom wall. I believe he also has a world map as well. He packs a wallet-sized periodic table in his back pocket, but it is microscopic and only useful in emergencies. My favorite is the poster-sized version he keeps in the back of the Jeep. You never know when you'll be at a light and need to know the atomic number of Boron.

Actually, one of the reasons I love Stan, and there's no way I would tell him this, is that he made me realize that, as a girl, I have all the power. I realize he's not your average high school boy or our next contestant on The Dating Game or anything, but he's a good guy and an honest friend. What made me realize that I have all the power was one night this summer after our Arabica routine (“Is that Franz Kafka jamming with Jim Morrison over there in the no joking section? I heard they're plotting the revolution and they need a drummer who can wear a beret”), we drove downtown in the dark listening to Neil Young. As we sang, tapped and swayed our heads along with “Like A Hurricane,” we arrived at the arboretum. While he turned off the car and set the brake, Stan mentioned that that song reminded him of me. Naturally, I immediately wanted to know exactly why and how, down to each lyric and chord change. He didn't want to pursue it at first, but I cried it out of him and it has changed my understanding of me as a girl in the world.

I know this runs counter to all truths in the modern world, and it took some crafting of theory after Stan's initial revelation, so be patient. As far as I could tell from Stan and from my experiences with the boys who think of themselves and others only in terms of body parts, all boys are interested in is one thing—girls. I realize that this component of my theory is simple and that everyone's grandmother knows this, but it gets better. Stan explained (actually, he sort of stammered) that I'm like a hurricane because whenever I'm around it's like there's a huge force that just blows him away. So I asked him, “Are we talking just body parts here? Because if you want breasts and thighs, pal, there's a Kentucky Fried Chicken just around the corner.” (There is, too, but you just can't see it from the arboretum.)

He said no, that it was all of me, my voice, my ideas. I know this sounds like lunar landing material, but Stan was serious and I believe him.

Besides, I think he's right. At seventeen, I'm average height, curly red hair and brown eyes. I'm no Charlie's Angel, but I don't chase cars and howl at the moon either. And although I'm no slut, I've made out with my fair share of high school boys. And every time, these guys are a mess. They get all slobby and try to sound manly and lovey all at the same time. It's pretty frightening, to be honest. These people have almost no control when confronted with female lips, a little tongue and the mere promise of more sweetness. Keep it down there, cougar. And you don't just have to make out with them either. You can just walk into a room, traipse down the hallway at school, or waltz into a store and you just feel it:

He may run banks, drive firetrucks and tinker with the government, but these guys can't toy with me. Ultimately, they can't do anything without me.

So they build up all these big pointy monuments and speedy red cars and act like they are IT to try and distract us women from the truth. I am it. Girls are it.

Wow. I will always be indebted to Stan for the spark of this realization. Now that I think of it, maybe that's why Stan doesn't have the big bazooka posters. Maybe he realizes the real truth and recognizes that he is truly powerless and that he'd better fly right or it's all over. I won't be the only one crushing him and it won't just be in school. Even though I only formulated this theory a few months ago and am still testing its validity and repeatability in both controlled and variable circumstances (Can you say minimum “B+” in all science classes?), so far, so good. I know I'm right.

This story was originally published in the fall 1996 issue of the now defunct Portland zine Blue Stocking. I have spent many hours trying to locate Maureen Milton or the editors/publishers of Blue Stocking in order to get permission to use this piece, but to no avail. It's such a great story I have decided to reprint it anyway. If you own the rights to it, please get in touch.
Rape is one consequence of this twisted social attitude. Rape is a form of sex that has nothing to do with pleasure and everything to do with power.

Likewise, perhaps it is not a coincidence that men who enjoy power over others are so often womanizers. Is it possible politicians seek to pursue power through sex, just as they pursue power through public office?

In our society sex is mostly about power. Instead of celebrations of pleasure giving, mutual respect and conviviality, romantic relationships are often games of domination and submission.

In our culture men are encouraged to pursue power-over. Most men feel comfortable with the idea of being in control. Possessing power is considered manly.

**Pleasure, on the other hand, implies the loss of control.**

**Pleasure operates in a zone where power is null and void.**

Sex involves closeness and the use of the “proximity” senses (touch, taste, smell). Most men in our culture are more comfortable with the “distance” senses (sight, hearing) where control can be maintained. Generally men are not comfortable relating to others through their bodies—through sensation. It is perhaps not surprising then that men often see romantic relationships as power relationships, rather than pleasure relationships.

Where there is strong eroticism, there is power. The point is that we have to change gender relations (and race and class relations as well) so that one person’s power is not another’s humiliation. We have to make sure that everyone can be both the lover and the beloved, the protector and the protected, the one who takes and the one who surrenders.

Mariana Valverde

*Sex, Power and Pleasure*
Beliefs create information in our heads that, by definition, we don't know for sure. Rather than have an empty space in our mind, we choose to just believe something. On an interesting or important subject, it is tempting to choose the most likely or most pleasant possibility and believe that. We tend to believe things that are consistent with other things we believe, and with who we believe we are. Beliefs multiply.

Gerald Angelo Cirrincione  
"Thoughts About Thinking"  
From the magazine *Truth Seeker*  
Vol. 120, No. 6, 1993

Here is an amazing fact. Planets that are millions of miles away and stars that are millions of light-years away can affect human events here on earth. If you are a rational human being, you may find this difficult to believe. But it’s true. Astrology is real, and it works.

Here’s proof: everyday ordinary people read their horoscopes and plan their lives based on its recommendations. More than one world leader has formulated battle plans and set national policy based on advice from astrologers. Those distant celestial bodies affect human history in real ways simply because some of us believe they do.

**Belief is truth.**  
What we believe is true because we act based on our beliefs, and our actions shape the world. We make our own values. We construct the framework that our lives are built around.

**Belief precedes knowledge.**  
We learn about the world through a filter, shaping the facts to fit our pre-existing beliefs. For most of us, when new facts come to light that support our belief system, we assimilate them. When new facts call our beliefs into question, we ignore them.
Belief is powerful.
What people believe is a blueprint for the kind of society they create. A society that believes humans are violent and bloodthirsty will suffer from crime and war. A society that believes in domination and control will be stratified and hierarchical. A society that believes making money is the key to happiness will be competitive and materialistic.

Power is belief.
At some point in our evolution we gave up social power—the power of community—and allowed it to be seized by one person or group. This apparent usurpation is all the more startling when we realize that power is based on simple belief. By allowing ourselves to be convinced that someone else is stronger, more knowledgeable, more moral, closer to God, or just more powerful (whatever that means) than we are, we have in effect participated in our own enslavement.

Belief is irrational.
Few of us examine our beliefs critically. We accept what we are taught by our parents, our teachers, our priests, our friends, the media. Since human beings seem to be largely irrational by nature, it is not surprising that we have irrational beliefs. But irrational beliefs can be positive and creative, or they can be destructive. A good example of a destructive irrational belief is the belief in God.

Belief entails responsibility.
Because we choose our beliefs, we must be accountable for our convictions, rather than blindly accepting ideas that have been passed down to us. If we have control of our beliefs, and beliefs can shape the world, why not believe in something positive? Instead of embracing cults of sacrifice and death, why not acquire beliefs that are life affirming? Rather than adopting social models that grind us down and bleed us of dignity and self-esteem, why not choose beliefs that can bring out the best in our human nature?

Beliefs can change. Not easily, but it can happen. Beliefs change when significant events in our lives touch our hearts. Intellectual arguments rarely change beliefs.

Be careful what you believe because it’s true.
THE POWER OF FEAR

Fear is instilled in us at an early age and infects our perceptions throughout our lives. We are taught to be afraid of crime, afraid of losing our jobs, afraid of AIDS, afraid of immigrants, afraid of the Russians (or the Moslems), afraid of terrorism, afraid of chaos, afraid of failure, afraid of not being loved, afraid of going to hell. All these apprehensions are seized on and magnified by the media, the government, the corporations and the Church, whipping us into a frenzy of fear.

Those in power use fear to manipulate and control us. Fear makes us the instruments of Power. When we are afraid, we obey. When we are afraid, we will do anything to feel safer.

The translation of dissonance into disorientation, disorientation into insecurity, and insecurity into fear—the mediations upon which the system’s domination of our subjectivity is built—all in the blink of an eye, is essential to the ongoing functioning of capitalism, for when we are afraid we are more susceptible to being manipulated and disempowered.

Mitchel Cohen
Fear & the Art of Neurosis Maintenance

Fear limits our freedom, keeps us from enjoying life to its fullest, prevents us from reaching our true human potential. Fear is why we do everything.
Power and violence are not the same. Power is psychological, a moral force that makes people want to obey. Violence enforces obedience through physical coercion. Those who use violence may manage to temporarily impose their will, but their command is always tenuous because when the violence ends, or the threat of it lessens, there is even less incentive to obey the authorities. Control through violence requires constant vigilance. Too little violence is ineffective; too much violence generates revolt.

Violence is the weapon of choice for the impotent.

Those who don’t have much power often attempt to control or influence others by using violence. Violence rarely creates power. On the contrary, groups or individuals that use violence often find their actions diminish what little power they do have.

Groups that oppose governments often try to compensate for their perceived lack of power by using violence. Such violence simply reinforces state power. A terrorist that blows up a building or assassinates a politician gives government the excuse it wants to crack down on individual liberties and expand its sphere of influence.

When a government turns to violence, it is because it feels its power is slipping away. Governments that rule through violence are weak.

Dictators have always had to rely on terror against their own populations to compensate for their powerlessness.

The U.S. would feel no need to fight wars in Latin America or the Persian Gulf if it had power in those regions. The only way to maintain control in the absence of power is through the continual use of violence. Protracted violence results in diminished power, making more violence necessary. ✗
The increasing use of violence against wage-workers and the expanding military-bureaucratic-terrorist apparatus is not an indicator of the strength of this system. On the contrary, the necessity of the use of force is unequivocable evidence of the threat which the present system faces.

Factories, offices, institutions, airports, powerhouses, government buildings and their representatives concealed behind the cover of barbed wires, thick walls, electronic devices and assault rifles are more besieged than victorious.

The threat to this system comes from the questioning of its very premises:

- Questioning of the reverence towards work.
- Questioning of the importance, the necessity and the utility of representatives and delegation of power.
- Questioning of the blessings of growth and progress.
- Questioning of the boons of science & technology
- Questioning of the very necessity of governments and governance.

Once people begin to question, all is lost as subversion takes over. ✗

“That Power is Weak That Seeks Omnipotence” is excerpted from a larger essay called *a ballad against work* published by A Publication For Collectivities. Their address is:

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Since the beginning of civilization, military power has been the primary instrument nation-states have used to control and dominate each other. With the growth of technology, the destructiveness of military force has reached apocalyptic proportions. As has been amply demonstrated in the twentieth century, the use of military violence exacts a huge toll on the societies of both sides in a conflict. War, and preparations for it, waste massive resources and brutalize the human spirit.

Today the use of military force is irrational. **After a point, increasing destructive potential does not translate into increased security. In fact, quite the opposite is true.**

Military force is an antiquated method of wielding power. It is arguably useful only in situations where one side possesses clear military superiority, like the U.S. now does over the rest of the world. But even then, its utility is doubtful. Look, for example, at the indecisive outcomes of our wars with North Vietnam and Iraq.

In the last few years we have seen a disturbing development in military tactics. During the Gulf War the U.S. was able to drop over 88,000 tons of explosives on Iraq with little risk to its own forces. This approach was perfected in the 1999 campaign against the Serbs, where not one U.S. pilot was killed during eleven weeks of bombing.

Now the technologically advanced nations of the world can prosecute wars and inflict massive casualties on their Third World enemies without taking casualties of their own. Perhaps more importantly, the technology of remote control warfare has overcome the natural human resistance to killing other people. It’s much easier to target blips on a computer screen than blow someone’s head off in a face-to-face battlefield confrontation.
THE GULF WAR

VIETNAM SYNDROME

“By God, we’ve kicked the Vietnam Syndrome once and for all.”

George Bush
March 1, 1991

Clausewitz said that war is the continuation of politics by other means. There is an element of truth to this. Politics does play a part in war. But war is largely a cultural phenomenon. It is something we learn; it is a way we are taught to react in certain situations. Men all over the world know, for instance, that when you are insulted or your pride is wounded, the proper response is to fight.

War is a manifestation of culture. Our culture values domination and control. It is not surprising that when we see regions of the world evolving autonomously, and events occurring beyond our influence, we feel threatened. Our culture values machismo and violence. When we feel emasculated, we look for a war.

The Vietnam War disaster left many Americans feeling humiliated. Panicky images of American diplomats, G.I.’s, and South Vietnamese civilians fleeing in terror, piling into helicopters on the roof of the U.S. Embassy as the North Vietnamese swarmed into Saigon, must have been particularly galling to the military and industrial elites who prosecuted and supported that war. They needed to kick some ass to feel like men again. George Bush and the Persian Gulf War were the answers to their prayers.

There were undoubtedly political reasons for fighting the 1991 Gulf War. We fought to protect the interests of large oil companies. We fought to project force and preserve influence in that part of the world. But most of all, we fought for sociopsychological reasons. Like a schoolyard bully, we were insecure, we were embarrassed, and someone had to pay.

The Gulf War was not unique in this respect. Most wars (though not all) are initiated for ostensibly rational political reasons, but the real reason is often below the surface: racism, the need for revenge, to demonstrate manliness, to regain national honor, to compensate for feelings of inferiority or sexual inadequacy. Ultimately, war is always an irrational act.

We make sporadic and largely ineffectual attempts to slow the international arms race. But if we ever want to end war we shall have to dig much deeper. Among other things, we shall have to create an androgynous society in which being male does not mean a preoccupation with toughness and staying in control but includes the full range of openly expressed human feelings, including nurturing and caring.

Michael C. C. Adams
The Great Adventure
THE GULF WAR (Continued)

GEORGE BUSH

The president sits alone in a large oval office. It is late at night. A single light burns, casting grisly shadows on the walls. The president sips a cup of tea and wonders if the pills his wife is taking will make her more comfortable. What a time to break a leg, he thinks. You see, gosh darn it, we rich Americans have problems too. We can’t be concerned about the lives of a few thousand Arabs. It’s God’s will that the powerful shall prevail. Doesn’t it say that in the bible somewhere?

George Bush dozes off at his desk and dreams of a perfect world. Men in turbans line up at the White House bearing gifts of oil and rare Persian rugs. African tribesmen dance the jitterbug on stage for an official state function, while members of the audience sip margaritas from Mexico and smoke hashish from Morocco. Polite applause follows the dancing.

Turkish taffy is passed out to the guests who gnaw at it hungrily, pausing now and again to vomit on the floor. A large pig is brought in and hung by a rope in the center of the room. Men in expensive white suits thrust spears into the shrieking swine while the women squeal with delight. The floor is sticky with blood.

When the animal has been sufficiently tortured, it is killed. Uproarious laughter fills the banquet hall. The guests form a line and take turns cutting hunks of flesh off the still warm carcass. Their eyes sparkle with delight as they wipe their bloody hands on their stylish clothes. “Imagine us,” they exclaim to each other in hushed, awed tones, “guests of the White House. Such an honor.”

The festivities conclude with three-legged races out in the Rose Garden under dark skies. A couple from Uzbekistan take home the trophy in a night of revelry they will never forget. Meanwhile, in the war room they stack the dead in neat piles; a man with a clipboard inspects each corpse for signs of treason.

I am the president. Elite, acerbic, witless, I peer fitfully from my sleep, trying without success to make heads or tails of a fluid situation. Oil must flow; oil must not stop flowing. Blood will flow; blood will not stop flowing.

Oil is slick and lubricates the wheels of business. Blood is thick and gums up our best-laid plans of victory and glory.

I sit alone on my bed. I never noticed how much of the sky you could see from this bedroom window. By God, the sky is black tonight, like an infinite void, a deep endless sea of darkness. Picking my nose isn’t very presidential. Now what do I do with the booger? I wish I didn’t have to make so many damn decisions.
There’s a taste in my mouth that won’t go away. It’s a taste of blood and sand and terrible errors. I can hear the sound of machinery, the buzzing helicopters, the roaring tanks, the screaming warplanes. There’s a stench in my nose that won’t go away. It’s the smell of molten metal and scorched sand and burning flesh. It’s the smell of high explosives detonated in a land far away on my orders. I can see something that I wish I could not see. A great fiery storm descends on the world, leaving me impotent and helpless.

The smooth blackness of night will soon be shattered by dawn. Then I must make the decision that has already been made by history. Events propel me forward, a pitiful pawn in a pitiless game. My feet hurt. My ass hurts. I wish to hell I knew what those idiots in the pentagon were talking about. I wish to hell they knew what they were talking about. So it comes down to this. A scared, spineless man making momentous decisions based on advice from a few ignorant experts.

The ayes of the nation upon him, George takes a bath. I’d better not play with my thingy, he says to himself—the press are never far away. George shaves and sees nothing in the mirror. George brushes his teeth and nearly goes through the White House roof when he hits a sensitive cavity. I’ve got to get that thing taken care of when this darn Gulf thing has blown over. I wonder what’s for breakfast. Should I go for the prune juice or the orange juice? Maybe the prune—I’ve been a little irregular lately. I wonder if there will be a war, George wonders wistfully.

The president pulls on his cowboy boots and stands up. What a handsome devil, he says to the mirror and imagines himself as John Wayne swaggering down to the war room, at last victorious over those pesky Indians. On the way to breakfast he trips an alarm and falls down the stairs. “Call in an air strike on those steps,” he barks to his military attaché. “I want them bombed continuously until their capacity to wage mischief is completely destroyed.”

George calls a press conference to explain the New World Order to the Iraqis. I’m an American, says George. We like to smash and bash and crash. Space age metal flying at the speed of sound is our kind of weapon. We can kill people with electronics and supersonics. Eat sand, kick ass, push your face in it. Blow you down, stomp your head, rip your guts with high-speed razor sharp steel. We’ll deflate your egos with pinpoint accuracy. We’ll send you sprawling and leave you bawling.

We’ll drive you down, stand on your carcass and plant our flag in your fucking face. We don’t take no shit from nobody. We like a fight. We always win.

Later the President sits on the toilet and reflects. This Gulf thing is a terrible tragedy, but it can’t be helped.

It’s great to have power. Because I know when I say march, my boys will march. And when I say shoot, my boys will shoot. And when I say die, my boys will spill their red American blood into the thirsty desert sand.
Schwarz also offers another frightening statistic. In a Gallup poll taken just before the start of the ground war in the Gulf, almost half of the respondents (48%) supported the use of nuclear weapons if it would help prevent U.S. casualties and end the war more quickly! Even Schwarz seems disturbed by this finding:

It is important to note that the Gallup question did not ask whether Americans approved of using nuclear weapons in response to Iraqi use of weapons of mass destruction. It merely asked whether Americans approved of nuclear weapons use if it might spare U.S. lives. The public, then, was expressing support for a nuclear first strike against Iraq; a position at variance with both U.S. policy and international law.

In summary, what Schwarz found was that while U.S. citizens are reluctant to get into wars at the outset, once their leaders commit troops, they want to win big. Casualties, rather than creating a groundswell for withdrawal, create calls for the use of more force to bring about a decisive victory. Schwarz worries that without the restraint provided by another superpower (i.e. the Soviet Union) future presidents might yield to this public pressure in future conflicts. So it may be that limited interventions are a thing of the past, and in the New World Order the ignorant, barbaric public will get what it wants: all-out total wars, fought to the bitter end by any means necessary.

CASUALTIES

While browsing in the library I stumbled upon a chilling little pamphlet called Casualties, Public Opinion and U.S. Military Intervention by Benjamin C. Schwarz. It was published by Rand, a public policy think tank partially funded by the Federal Government. The study was commissioned by the Army and Air Force “to analyze the influence of American public opinion on U.S. military intervention and its implications for U.S. regional deterrence strategies.” Schwarz studied U.S. public opinion polls taken during the wars in Korea, Vietnam, and the Persian Gulf.

The conventional wisdom is that Americans have no stomach for casualties, and that when our soldiers start dying in large numbers, we’re ready to go home. The author found that exactly the opposite is true.

During the wars in Korea and Vietnam, while the number of people who approved of the original intervention dropped as casualties mounted, the percentage advocating withdrawal stayed relatively constant. Moreover, as U.S. casualties increased, the number of people favoring escalation increased. In fact at the height of both wars, far more people advocated escalation than withdrawal.

The Gulf War did not last long enough to create many U.S. casualties, but polls indicated the public wanted the war fought to its conclusion, with Saddam Hussein removed from power and Iraq completely crushed.
LET'S HAVE A WAR

Schwarz also includes some handy tips for future presidents who may want to start a war but can't quite get that initial public support. He recommends three ways to “help the public make the difficult decision to support intervention.”

1. Convince the public “either during a crisis (or better yet, before a crisis), that the security of a particular region, resource, or state is a matter of vital American interest.”

2. Make them believe that the intervention will not cost much money or involve many U.S. casualties.

3. Develop a “forward presence.” That is, send advisors who can get drawn into the fighting. “Once a commitment is undertaken, regardless of the wisdom behind it, the public is very unlikely to call for a withdrawal.”

The author ends this section with a caution:

Of course, the above discussion of the means to win initial public support suggests that such efforts could easily entail cynical, and even dishonest, manipulation by policymakers.

Fortunately, we have no policymakers like that in this country.

LIMITS

Many of the Iraqi soldiers that had occupied Kuwait were able to escape. At the end of the war Iraq retained a lot of weapons and still possessed a considerable war fighting capability. The Iraqi army remains one of the largest in the world. And of course, ten years later Saddam Hussein is still in power. So why did Bush stop the war early?

The President could easily have further enhanced his macho public image by slaughtering more Iraqis. His General Schwarzkopf wanted to continue the carnage. We had the military capability to turn Iraq into a smoldering cinder, or to occupy Baghdad and arrest Saddam. The public obviously wanted a clear, decisive victory. So why not do it? Was George, for all the macho bluster, really a wimp?

Bush would probably have loved to finish off Saddam, but there were many constraining factors. The major one may have concerned our need to demonstrate to other countries in the region (our “allies”) that we were fair and “humanitarian.” We did not want to be seen by them as occupiers, calling up memories of the Middle East’s colonial past. We may have fought the Gulf War to ensure our control of the region but, like it or not, we knew afterwards we would still depend on the support of nearby countries for bases, matériel, and public relations management. Bush may have also feared that images on CNN depicting the wholesale slaughter of fleeing Iraqis (“shooting fish in a barrel” as one U.S. pilot put it) would bring a negative reaction from the global public. Although only a minority of bleeding-heart Americans would likely find “enemy” deaths objectionable, our regional allies might have seen it differently.

There were other considerations as well. The UN mandate was limited to ejecting the Iraqis from Kuwait, and did not include conquering Iraq. There was the possibility of bloody street fighting in Basra, or being sucked into a civil war (the “quagmire syndrome”). U.S. interests might be damaged even more if Saddam fell and was replaced by a Shiite regime.

We ran up against such restrictions during the Vietnam War as well. The public may have wanted to apply maximum force to get the war over quickly, but our leaders were smart enough (sic) to realize that was infeasible. It would have meant more U.S. casualties, more domestic upheaval, and possibly war with the Chinese and/or Soviets. It was physically doable, but politically untenable.

Military force and power are not the same thing. There are limits to the efficacy of war making.

Possessing all the firepower in the world does not guarantee control. Power does not always grow out of the barrel of a gun.

It is a complicated world and there are many different forces at work, forces that the tunnel- visioned militarists and simple-minded public would do well to heed.
Yet still the war goes on. The U.S.-led embargo against Iraq prevents the repair of infrastructure devastated during the bombing. Raw sewage runs in the streets of Baghdad. Electrical service is undependable. Medical equipment sits idle for the lack of spare parts. The distribution of food and medicine is difficult when not impossible.

As always in war, it is the weak that suffer most—infants, children, the elderly.

Because of the sanctions, malnutrition in Iraq is widespread. Infectious diseases propagate wildly due to the lack of proper sanitation and refrigeration. Cancers in children have increased by a factor of four since 1991, and there is an epidemic of childhood leukemia, possibly the result of some 40 tons of depleted uranium that still litter the country. (We've finally found a way to get rid of our nuclear waste—make it into projectiles and fire it at our enemies.) According to UNICEF, as of 1998 more than half a million children under the age of five had died as a direct result of the sanctions, and between 2,000 and 6,000 more children continue to die each month. C'est la guerre.
There are also domestic costs to our campaign to destroy Iraq—the karma of war. We may have won, and our casualties may have been low, but our society continues to suffer from the violence. There is Gulf War Syndrome, an illness contracted by GI's from exposure to one or more of the many toxins present on the battlefield. There are the wasted resources (well over 100 billion dollars), while the homeless sprawl on our cities' sidewalks and one quarter of all U.S. children live in poverty. There are the U.S. soldiers who learned not only how to kill, but that killing for a “just cause” is the right thing to do. Listen to this paragraph from the New York Times about Timothy McVeigh, who bombed the Oklahoma City Federal Building in 1995:

Perhaps the Gulf War was a turning point for him. “When he came back, he seemed broken,” said his aunt, Mrs. Zanghi. “When we talked about it, he said it was terrible there. He was on the front line and had seen death and caused death.” She said that young McVeigh, a gunner on a Bradley fighting vehicle, spoke of killing Iraqis and had told her, “After the first time it got easy.”

Then there is the next war to think about. How can we say we kicked Saddam's ass when he is still in power and uses every opportunity to rub our noses in that fact?

**Did the Gulf War really make us feel good about ourselves again? Or will we need to prove our toughness again somewhere?**

In any case, preparations for the next war go on—the military budget continues to grow even as money allocated for human services shrinks. The cycle of violence continues.

C’est la guerre.

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**NEW WORLD ORDER**

After the collapse of Communism in the Soviet Union, the U.S. suddenly had the world to itself. The Persian Gulf War provided the first opportunity to flex some muscle. Iraq was the perfect target because its borders contained the second largest oil reserve in the world, and the Iraqis refused to kowtow to the U.S. and do its bidding.

During the war the U.S. continually bombed Iraqi infrastructure. Generating plants, sewage treatment facilities, bridges, roads, communication centers, canals, food processing plants, and factories were all targeted. The goal seemed to be the destruction of Iraqi society.

Like much of the bombing during the war, the current sanctions primarily target not Saddam Hussein, but the Iraqi social system. I’m willing to bet Saddam and his cronies have more than enough food and medicine. It is the people of Iraq who are suffering, and it is Iraqi society that is being ripped apart by the stress of deprivation.
Clearly the U.S. has nothing against dictators; just dictators who choose to operate separate from Western power and influence. U.S. officials would like nothing more than a strong, pro-U.S. leader in Iraq ruling over a weak, broken, compliant population. That was the objective of the bombing, and that continues to be the goal of sanctions.

This is the meaning of the New World Order—complete and total control of strategic regions around the globe. The New World Order wishes to dominate not only leaders and governments, but the hearts and minds of the people as well.

As the US and UK continue the almost daily bombing of Iraq, the message is clear: new rules of international conduct are being written. The war on Iraq and the aerial bombardment of Yugoslavia in 1999 illustrate that the theater of operations for the US Air Force and NATO now includes Eastern and Central Europe, the Middle East, North Africa, and parts of East Asia. Dissent and nonconformity regarding these rules will not be tolerated. America’s risk-free wars are unencumbered by any counterbalances on the international scene or in the domestic arena.

Naseer Aruri
“America’s War Against Iraq: 1990-1999”
From the book Iraq Under Siege
Anthony Arnove, ed.

In the New World Order everyone takes orders from us. We tolerate no dissension.

Don’t count on our humanitarian tendencies to temper our wrath, because we are merciless in our mission.

If your military threatens our hegemony, we will defeat it.

If your government wants to control its own natural resources, we will overthrow it.

If your society harbors beliefs and cultural values that are proud and nationalistic, that promote resistance to exploitation and bullying, we will strangle it.

Total control; complete domination; absolute power—the dream of all great rulers; the goal of all great empires.

But of course there is no such thing as unconditional power, and those who strive for it are certain to meet resistance at every turn.

In the rich as well as the poor nations of the world there are rumblings of discontent with the New World Order. With every struggle, new ideas and forms of refusal are explored; new nonviolent weapons are developed and refined. The resisters may never win, but their struggles will not allow the Czars of the New World Order to win either. Such is the nature of power: victory is never total, defeat never final.
Since the original publication of this zine in June 2001, there have been some changes. There will not be a Fragments #3 anytime soon, if ever. Marketing and distribution are just too expensive and time consuming. But FragmentsWeb is alive and well. The new address is:

http://www.fragmentsweb.org

There is also a new Fragments e-mail address:

contact@fragmentsweb.org

Please include the number “333” somewhere in the e-mail subject line so your message will not be deleted by my junk mail filters.

Copies of Fragments #1 are gone. However, there is a PDF version on the Fragments site (click on the “Fragments Zine” link). To learn about new additions to the FragmentsWeb site, send an e-mail requesting update announcements. I will not send more than four a year and, of course, your address will never be shared with anyone. If you want multiple copies of Fragments #2, please contact me. I will send you as many as you like for the cost of postage.

Thanks to everyone who helped in this effort, especially those who helped me find photos and those who gave me permission to use their photographs or essays.

—James VanHise
...if one judges one’s state by personal time, one can’t help feeling caught naked in a massive storm. If one judges by political time, then the issues offered are frustrating and elementary, however necessary it may be to engage them, as a tiny but influential part of a century-long process. You can’t help but take on the greater pattern, and feel where you are within it, and your acts take on meaning. Meaning is the beginning of power.

Michael Ventura
Shadow Dancing in the U.S.A.