

Let them eat art! The 21c public-private partnership

By Danny Mayer

In April, marital partners Laura Lee Brown and Steve Wilson, founding owners of Louisville-based boutique hotel 21c, held a press conference under the pavilion at Cheapside Park to announce their \$36 million purchase and renovation plans for Lexington's 15-story First National Building, the city's first skyscraper. Along with a pair of smaller adjoining buildings, Wilson told a crowd of local leaders gathered for the occasion, the iconic downtown structure would become the fourth 21c Museum Hotels franchise location. "This is a combination hotel and a real art museum. It is not art for decoration," Wilson said.

Local talk of the renovation has tracked city leader and 21c talking points focusing on aesthetics and downtown revitalization. But whatever its aesthetic value or ability to inspire a new urban "confidence," the 21c project seems to be a decades-old urban repackaging of trickle down economics: a public/private partnership in finance in which the public assumes collateral and risk and the private owners reap the returns. Of the \$36.5 million needed to purchase, renovate and open 21c as a boutique hotel, over 60 percent of it (\$22.5 million) will come from tapping public funds at the city, state and federal levels, much of it through programs geared toward low- and moderate-income citizens.

If you want to see the democratic/economic policies pillaging the nation and globe writ devastatingly small, look

no further than 21c. Here's three themes that should be familiar.

Cronyism: the Rupp Task Force

The 21c renovation has been deemed the first project in the redevelopment of the Rupp Arena District, for which the city has already committed itself to \$2.5 million in preliminary funding (with another \$2.5 million in state funds). The sentiment of 21c as Rupp standard-bearer even appears on a 21c federal loan application for Section 108 funds.

Here's Herald-Leader writer Tom Eblen introducing his readers to 21c business partner Craig Greenberg: "Greenberg said one thing that attracted [21c] to Lexington was the new, visionary plan for redeveloping 46 city-owned acres around Rupp Arena and Lexington Center. The plan calls for renovating Rupp, moving and expanding the convention center, adding mixed-use private development and uncovering Town Branch Creek to create a downtown water feature. Greenberg said the plan's success 'will be absolutely critical to downtown.'"

One would hope Greenberg would feel this strongly about the plan that enthusiastically endorses a \$350-\$700 million public/private redevelopment of the area. Eblen never mentions it, but in 2010 Greenberg was appointed by Jim Gray to the Rupp Task Force's Planning and Design subcommittee. It is in part his plan.

Greenberg was joined on that Rupp Task Force by Central Bank CEO Luther Deaton, who, as it turns out, now holds



Future home of 21c Hotel. Photo by Kenn Minter.

the note on 21c's only known privately-funded revenue stream, a \$14 million building loan. Joining Deaton on the finance subcommittee was Paul Varga, vice president of Brown-Forman, the distilled spirits company that is also the source of 21c owner Laura Lee Brown's immense wealth. At \$15,000, Brown-Forman landed fifth among donors who paid the \$350,000 for the Rupp Task Force to exist, landing behind only UK

Continued on page 5

Be George Bailey: Support the AHTF

By Beth Connors-Manke

The transcendent part of *It's a Wonderful Life* is supposed to be George Bailey's realization that his life, disappointing as it was to him, had positively impacted others' lives. As viewers, we're supposed to empathize with George's struggles and be warmed by his hope and reconciliation at the end. However, when I watched the film again last week, the part that resonated the most wasn't George's redemption; it was the economics of housing.

If you haven't watched the film yet this holiday season, I'll recap: George feels the building and loan, which he inherited from his father, is a stone around his neck, but the thing that keeps him in the business isn't careerism or a desire for stability. It's that there is so much injustice related to housing in Bedford Falls. The villainous Henry Potter has immigrants and other working class folk over the barrel; as his tenants, they are at the mercy of his exorbitant rent, which keeps them from getting ahead. They can't save; they can't buy their own homes; they can't start their own businesses. Potter benefits from the slums he creates; he profits from hamstringing the finances of "the rabble," as he calls them. The building and loan, on the other hand, allows citizens to borrow money to build their own homes and get out from under Potter's heel.

Continued on page 3

Weed and the White House

By Marcus Flores

Says the Tenth Amendment of the United States Constitution: "The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people." Given the stratification of state and local governments, the amendment authorizes the concept of "laboratories of democracy," in theory allowing the states to experiment with, among other policies, the legalization of cannabis.

The Controlled Substance Act of 1970—scribbled into law by no less an alcoholic than Nixon—yanked away the states' rights to craft sensible drug policy by labeling cannabis a *federal* offense. At least in their untethered youth, some notable politicians have ignored the Act. Speaking in 1992, President Bill Clinton informed us all that he tried cannabis but "did not inhale and did not like it." (I do not know which is harder to believe.) And in 2007, then-candidate Barack Obama was asked if he had tried cannabis. The brave questioner deterred any Clinton-esque equivocation with the qualifier "inhale." Nonplussed, Obama answered in the affirmative: "Inhaling was the point!" If Ben Chandler's recent campaign was any indication of how pettiness can influence politics (specifically, the way in which he labeled Andy Barr a criminal for the most egregious transgression of possessing a fake ID in college), then Obama's career might never have taken off had he to suffer his confession in a court of law.

Continued on page 7

Last century's Kentucky Camp Nelson to High Bridge, part 2

By Wesley Houpp

Another mile downstream from Candle Stick, the river, having curved sharply to the southeast, bends hard again to the northeast then back northwest around Polly's Bend. Swallow Rock and Golden Gate, two relief formations, loom high on the Jessamine palisade. In the mid-afternoon sun I see how Golden Gate got its name. The sheer limestone face, extending down 300 feet to the surface of the water, glows an El Dorado, and Swallow Rock, a series of relief arches etched in younger, higher strata, appears an Olympian balcony. At present, one black vulture monitors our idyll.

By the time we approach the mouth of Jessamine Creek, the sun has dipped below Ox Bow Bend to the west. Bottomland, overgrown with poplar and box elder opens on the right. The ruins of an old barn sag in the shadows, a last reminder of Garrett Alcorn's toiling on Earth and what the term "small farming" meant for the first half of the last century. Funny saying that, "the last century." Makes it sound so antique, so remote. Alcorn, like so many small farmers along the Kentucky's corridor, cobbled together respectable tobacco crops, cultivating every little piece of arable acreage available. Given the current condition of this bottom, it's hard to imagine rows of burley straddling the bank, but for many years he tended this humble piece, doing most of the hard labor by himself. He fashioned a long sycamore pole with a spike near the top for "housing" his crop—the process

of hanging "sticks" of tobacco (usually six stalks speared onto one oaken stick) in the tier-rails of the barn. Tier-rails run the length of the barn, perpendicular to the cross-members, part of a tobacco barn's superstructure. The distance from one set of cross-members to the next is called a "bent." Alcorn's barn was five bents, three tier-rails deep at the ridge, allowing him to reach the top set of rails with a twenty-foot pole. Having grown up on tobacco farms and housed many a crop with my father, brother, and rotating cast of local color ("Devil," "Jaybird," "Mugs," "Pig Albert" to name a few), I'm intimately familiar with the task and marvel at both Alcorn's ingenuity and strength. From the mouth of Jessamine Creek, he hauled his cured leaf topside, perhaps even floating it down to High Bridge by flatboat in the early years to be loaded onto wagon or truck and hauled north to Harrodsburg Road and the warehouses lining South Broadway in Lexington, the burley capital of the world, where the mesmerizing voices of auctioneers trailed up and down the endless rows of tobacco baskets, and sharecroppers, like Alcorn, shellacked spittoons with dark splats of



Camp on Jessamine Creeek. Photo by Wesley Houpp.

juice, waiting anxiously by the scale operator's window. Livelihood by the pound.

Jessamine Creek Gorge

Jessamine Creek angles due north for about half a mile, bends east to southeast before cutting back to the north and winding in a more or less northerly course through its magnificently remote gorge—one of the county's best kept secrets. The Nature Conservancy, along with County Parks

Continued on page 4

Contents

2-Neighborhood

Street feminism
Lincoln film review
dead prez record review
Joyland

4-Region

Mayer's Commission on the Rich

6-World

200 years of corporate creep
Citizen's United turns three
Ayn Rand memorial

7-Opinion

Project Appleseed
Letters

8-Comics

I'm not from here
Delmar von Lexington
Best Dang Comics
Salubrious Soup

Coming soon

On holiday break. Back in February.

Many thanks to all our our contributors. We sincerely appreciate your time, effort and interest.

DECEMBER 2012

Street feminism

Misadventures in the city

By Beth Connors-Manke

I've been a feminist for a long time and have always seen it as a survival skill, a way of protecting myself. For instance, when I was in grade school I was issued this warning: "Stay a way from that park—a girl got raped there." (The park area abutted our suburban neighborhood.) This turned out to be one of many warnings that I received over the years, many of which were validated by stories of friends who were raped, friends who were persuaded that sex was the main thing they had to offer, friends who circumscribed their lives because of sexist pressures. All this made me immensely angry—as it should have—and feminism helped me push back. It

also helped me survive girlhood relatively unscathed.

But then came workplace sexual harassment. Then came working in a domestic violence shelter. Then came female students telling their stories in my office after class let out. Then came knowledge of human trafficking. Youth may have been hard, but being a grown woman hasn't been much easier. Now my feminism is about much more than keeping myself safe, more than pushing for my own equality. I feel responsible for protecting my sisters, my nieces and nephews, my students—even women and children on the street whom I do not know.

That being said, I'm also old enough that my response to sexism is fairly

refined. There are plenty of chauvinist jerkoffs in the world, but they aren't all my problem. Likewise, not every sexist remark or action threatens me because I know my own power. So, when the sticker showed up, I spent some time mulling it over before I plastered over it.

The sticker was pasted to a utility box that I walk past every day on the way to work. The illustration depicted a naked woman on her knees, breast thrust forward, expression blank. In the upper corner of the sticker was some ridiculously cryptic phrase about her being a number or something. Once I saw the image, I couldn't not see it every day when I passed, so for several months I thought about it daily.

Since it was a trite porno pose, the sticker bugged me, but I gave the artist the benefit of the doubt for a few weeks. Maybe he or she was trying to make an avant-garde statement about the objectification of women? Maybe the "x"s that represented her eyes showed how it deadened a woman's soul to be reduced to a sex toy. The ambiguous phrase kind of lent to that hypothesis, but it was, um, too ambiguous to tell.

Eventually, it was repetition that determined my judgment about the image. Looking at it every day, all I could see was that some artist decided it was their prerogative to make pedestrians, including the kids who attended the nearby school, look at an objectified female form. Whether the artist's message was radical or not, the art failed. It just looked like sexist porn. Every. Single. Time.

I got tired of being angry on the way to work, so eventually my hand

put a sticker saying "Art for Everyone" over the nudie. I felt self-satisfied and relieved that nobody would have to look at the illustration any more. But then one day, my sticker was gone and the thrust breasts were back. The war was evidently on. I tried to rip the sticker down, removing as much of her naked torso as I could.

Feminist ire placated, my pedestrian commute grew mundane again. I looked at the trees, noticed the seasonal decorations on local businesses, avoided traffic calamities—until a few weeks ago when I noticed graffiti on the side of a *Skirt* box. If you're not familiar with *Skirt*, it's a free monthly magazine that is mostly promotional copy aimed at women. It's pretty like Pinterest and doesn't say much.

The graffiti, though, did say a lot: "Pop a bitch like a pimple." Needless to say, I didn't give this piece of street art the benefit of the doubt. As soon as I could, I stickered it. I didn't care about the context of the rap song from which it came, in part because the one comment on the song said: "lol 'Pop A Bitch Like A Pimple' that's funny but dope :D Good track." Whatever the context in the song, on the Skirt box, the phrase voiced what rapists, human traffickers, and other brutes think: women are worthless, women are to be used—and they (we) can be treated that way anywhere, even in public.

That's the rub of all of this, really. That under the guise of art or music, some "artists" publicly circulate violent threats to women and demand that we pay attention to their need to subjugate others. That's far from "dope," but I do have an antidote for it: street feminism—and probably more stickers.



Street feminism strikes back on a Skirt magazine rack. Photo by Captain Commanokers.

Abraham Lincoln, Daniel Day-Lewis and Stephen Spielberg:

A cinematic trifecta

By Cameron Lindsey

Raise your hand if you want to see a movie about Abraham Lincoln's rise to the role of president, his famous Gettysburg Address, his assassination, or his brief stint as a vanquisher of the undead. If your hand is raised, you may not want to see Stephen Spielberg's new movie *Lincoln* (though the recent *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Slayer* might appeal to those who raised their hands to the last point).

No, *Lincoln* is not an easy flick about our favorite anecdotes surrounding the sixteenth president of our fair Union. Lincoln is, however, a captivating legal drama that gives a more honest account of the, as it turns out, not so honest Abe.

The film surrounds Daniel Day-Lewis as the iconic president right before he starts his second term and in the concluding weeks of the Civil War. Its focus is on Lincoln's struggles to pass the Thirteenth Amendment in the House of Representatives to guarantee the freedom of all slaves. While the president has the support of the citizenry and many congressmen, he clashes with one of the political parties in the House (sound familiar?) and makes every attempt to secure the votes for his amendment—through legal and other means. On the domestic front, the film depicts a president who faces a mentally ailing wife, a son who wishes to join the military, and a conscience that frequently makes him reassess his choice to postpone the end of a bloody war in order to ensure the emancipation of all slaves.

All of this turmoil provides Day-Lewis with enough character development to garner him an Oscar nomination for Best Actor. The sixteenth president certainly represents a change from Day-Lewis's more recent roles. Lincoln is no Daniel Planview or Bill the Butcher. In *Lincoln*, Day-Lewis shows audiences his ability to quiet down and draw you in. Even when he does yell and lose his temper (the "Now, now, now" recognizable from the trailers), the speech comes off more

as a scolding father who knows what is best than anger, and Day-Lewis's ability to keep the audience in love with his character while convincing a city of bureaucrats to see his way is simply stunning. At the same time, Tony Kushner's screenplay, loosely based on the book *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln* by Doris Kerns Goodwin, provides Day-Lewis with scene-stealing displays of Lincoln's aptitude for stories and witticisms. As an audience, we both laugh at the stories and nod in agreement at their moral that, yes, slavery is wrong.

Day-Lewis certainly does command the screen for the film's two and a half hours, but the movie would not be the same without the supporting roles. Sally Field excellently performs her role as the psychologically unstable Mary Todd Lincoln, and Tommy Lee Jones does a wonderful job of being himself, as he does in so many roles, as the energetic abolitionist Thaddeus Stevens. Even moviegoers who only went out to see *The Dark Knight Rises* or *Looper* this season will be pleasantly surprised to see Joseph Gordon-Levitt in the role as Lincoln's oldest son, Robert.

This is where Spielberg's direction really shows through. Each of these actors, nuanced either by their previous roles, hiatus from the big screen, or acting limitations, exhibits a performance that seems meant for them. Spielberg recreates these historical characters so that Jones, for example, can use his southern scruff in a way that makes audiences genuinely care for the embittered old man when he passionately calls for abolition. Spielberg's ability to command both tragedy and comedy in stories and actors also comes through in Field's performance as she fights with depression in one scene and makes audiences laugh in the next. In *Lincoln*, Spielberg shows his skill by taking a story filled with legal jargon and constitutional law that every audience member knows yet managing to put on a show that has audiences crying, laughing, and celebrating along with all of his characters.

Proper propaganda

Review of Information Age by dead prez

By Martin Mudd

In their best album since the groundbreaking debut *Let's Get Free*, revolutionary hip-hop duo dead prez have released a masterpiece in *Information Age*. In the decade following *Let's Get Free*, stic.man and M-1 have released some great singles amid some weaker material, but this album is a rock-solid return to form, a much-needed update to their radical message encoded in catchy beats and poetic lyrics.

Since their early days, dead prez have geared their artistic decisions toward using popular musical forms to spread their uncompromisingly revolutionary message to a wide audience. *Let's Get Free* was a savvy blend of gangstarap bangers and soul-inspired tunes; *Information Age*, meanwhile, adapts recent trends in hip-hop and electro to incorporate bust-ya-shit-out dance beats and synthesized vocals. What has not changed is dead prez's lyrical quality and flows, which are liquid, inspired, and inspiring. If something inside you has not changed by the time you finish listening to this album, then you probably need to check yourself.

The album's concept speaks to the technological reality in which we find ourselves today. The intro track opens with a female-sounding computerized voice saying, "Uploading: Information Age." The suspense builds as the futuristic auditory progress bar bleeds into the album's first song, "A New Beginning."

Ultimately, there are no surprises in *Lincoln*. For those of you who have not passed seventh grade, spoiler alert: the South loses, the Thirteenth Amendment passes, and Lincoln dies. Amazingly, though, Spielberg whips up his cinematic magic to present a movie that captivates its audience in a story that could easily have been summarized through a look at the vote in the House of Representatives on that January day in 1865. With a script that brings humor and applause, award-winning performances, and original music by John Williams that could make C-SPAN seem empowering, Lincoln tells a powerful story of a powerful man in one of the most powerful films of the year.

The same female voice will end the album with an announcement that you are "Downloading." The theme of digital upload/download works, I think, on two levels. First, it is a winking acknowledgement to the reality of the recording industry today: many of the people listening will have obtained the music, as I did, by downloading it for free on the Internet. Second, it is a not-so-subtle reminder that dead prez are uploading this album, full of practical, political and spiritual knowledge, into your brain. After you are finished listening/uploading, the idea is to download the knowledge to friends and comrades. The act completes the cycle of participatory education mentioned so often in dead prez lyrics: "each one teach one." dead prez don't really care about the "illegal" download—they want the knowledge to spread.

Before it recites a laundry list of the systemic problems staring this society in the face, the album's first song, "A New Beginning," dead prez reveal who they know to be at least part of their audience. "Try to save the trees / but you can't go green / without that black and red / if we gon get free / we got to change that light bulb in our head." They are reaching out to speak to young middle-class people across the nation who acknowledge the global ecological collapse we face, but who also, perhaps seeing the failure of the bullshit "go green" consumerist approach, are frozen in fear of the impending "end of the world." But as the dead prez lyrically emphasize, we can choose to see collapse, the decay of the American empire, not as "the end of the world," but instead as a "new beginning," a perspective that more easily resonates with oppressed people who have been surviving the system all along: "They dollar's losing value/ but the hood knew that already." It is a cutting but hopeful sentiment, echoed later in the cut "Take Me To The Future," that another world is possible which we must fearlessly build together: "Change is so necessary / cuz they system is not workin'."

This is not to say that dead prez optimism overrides the problems of the

Continued on page 5

“For me, the ‘shrinking American middle class’ is not an abstract concept. I see it every time I walk through my own neighborhood.”

Joyland: a perspective from the hood

By Dave Cooper

I live in the Joyland neighborhood, on the northern edge of Lexington. A person could live their whole life in Lexington and not even know that this neighborhood exists.

Joyland—named for the defunct amusement park on Paris Pike which operated from 1923 to 1964—lies between Paris Pike and Russell Cave Roads, and is bordered on the south and west by the conjoined Interstates 75 and 64. The northern boundary is the urban services boundary, and beyond that it's Bluegrass farmland.

My neighborhood is primarily single-family brick ranch homes built in the late 1950s and early 60s when companies such as Square D, Dixie Cup, IBM and Trane were hiring workers for their new factories. Most of the original homes have three bedrooms and one bath and are about 1,000 square feet. By today's standards that's a very small house, so over the years many homeowners have added onto their homes in innumerable configurations. Most of the homes are modest, even plain. A few homes made from fieldstone are attractive. The street names are corny: Mimi Court, Irene Drive, Judy Lane and so on.

There are about 500 homes in this neighborhood, a handful of churches, an elementary school plus a low-income complex called Parkway Plaza Apartments. Inside the neighborhood there is no commercial property, but on Paris Pike there is a Speedway gas station, a half-empty strip mall with a bank and a hair parlor, the Joyland Bowl and a sketchy convenience store. Also on Paris Pike is a Waffle House near the interstate exit. Our neighborhood is a Waffle House kind of neighborhood.

I have lived in Joyland for almost ten years. When I moved back to Kentucky from my unfortunate one-year stint in Huntington, West Virginia, I was out of work and not looking to get back into the job market quickly, so the option of moving in with my girlfriend seemed ideal. When she bought her house in the early 80's, homes in the neighborhood were going for under \$40,000. Today the homes without additions in Joyland generally sell for around \$100,000.

Pluses and minuses

Like any neighborhood, Joyland has its pluses and minuses. On the plus side, it's close to the interstates and traffic is never a problem. I can't remember once in 10 years being stuck in traffic anywhere near our neighborhood. It's easy to bicycle downtown via Old Paris Pike and North Limestone. Another big plus is the low cost of living and low crime rate. Patty has lived in her home for more than 30 years and has never had a break-in.

Joyland is also happily integrated, which is cool. I estimate that the neighborhood is roughly 50 percent caucasian, 40 percent black and about 10 percent Hispanic. There do not seem to be any visible signs of tension between neighbors—most people just keep to themselves. In fact, considering how many people live in my neighborhood, it's surprising how little you actually see them. I think most of them watch a lot of TV.

The school district is not ideal: Mary Todd Elementary has a low academic ranking, although the school building has just undergone a multi-million dollar facelift. After that, kids in Joyland go to Winburn Middle School and then Bryan Station High School. This is a good neighborhood for retirees and young couples without kids, or for those who want to home-school their kids.

On the minus side, Joyland is just awash in noise from the nearby interstates. I drive around the country a lot, and it perplexes me that almost every other state in America has decided that sound walls along the interstates are a very good thing. I'm not just talking about big cities—even in small communities like Livingston, TN (population 3,431) they have sound walls along the highways to reduce the noise levels in the nearby neighborhoods. I was recently in Silver Spring, MD, and my aunt's neighborhood is protected from the DC Beltway by a concrete wall about 20 feet tall. It works great at reducing the sound levels.

The interstate noise level in our neighborhood varies with the wind, but the prevailing winds are from the west, which means that most days we get a steady roar. It seems to be worst late at night—you can go out in my backyard at 3:00am, and the noise from all of the



Fieldstone house in Joyland neighborhood. Photo by Dave Cooper.

trucks on the interstate is just stupefying. I hate it.

Kentucky Department of Transportation spends a lot of money paving roads that don't need paving and building roads that don't need to be built (such as the proposed I-75 Connector from Nicholasville), but they don't do a good job mitigating the impacts of these roads on communities. If sound walls were built to protect our neighborhood, the property values for every single home in my neighborhood would jump instantly.

But sound walls would still not protect us from the harmful exhaust fumes that come from the interstate. Like sound, diesel exhaust from the heavy truck traffic on I-75/I-64 is blown into our neighborhood by the prevailing westerly winds, so I and all my neighbors are being subjected to known carcinogens with every breath we take. No one in Lexington or Kentucky state government seems to recognize the health impacts of the interstate highways on communities, and it appears that it will take many, many years of community organizing and agitating before we reduce truck traffic on our interstates and start shipping freight the correct way: by rail.

Neighborhood turnover

Because the homes in our neighborhood are about 50 years old, the original home owners—the Square D factory workers—are now elderly. Their homes are easy to spot: they have neatly trimmed yards, occasionally featuring a concrete birdbath (painted white) or a wagon wheel. Their windows are shaded by aluminum awnings. The landscaping consists of three yew bushes—equally spaced—and a pot of marigolds on the front steps.

When these folks pass, the houses go up for sale, and they are increasingly

being bought at auction by absentee landlords. To reduce maintenance costs, the absentee landlords cut down the mature trees and mow over the flowerbeds and rent them out for \$750 a month. These homes are also easy to spot: they are the ones with multiple cars parked in the front yard and the overflowing Herbies that never seem to leave the curb.

I'm not saying renters are bad people, but most renters know that they are going to be living somewhere else in a year or six months, so they don't have the inclination to get to know their neighbors or get involved in the community. And as for the maintenance of the property, that's the landlord's problem.

Why aren't new homeowners buying these homes when they come up for sale? The American dream of owning your own home and going to work at a steady job, then retiring after 30 years, is so long gone now that it's almost forgotten. Our new neighbors are the ones working the cash register at Dollar General, then going to their second job at night at Waffle House. They are single parents and the grandparents raising their grandchildren.

These hard-working folks are bombarded by images on TV and endless advertisements on the music station for things they cannot afford, but they buy them anyway. They eat too much highly-processed food that makes them feel bad, and they are hopelessly out of shape. They are fearful of violent crime, even though there isn't any in our neighborhood. They are in debt and so exhausted and stressed they can't even bring in their garbage cans at night.

For me, the “shrinking American middle class” is not an abstract concept. I see it every time I walk through my own neighborhood.

AHTF, cont.

Continued from page 1

And then the Depression hits. George forgoes his honeymoon because there's a run on all the financial institutions. The newlyweds end up in a run-down, vacant old house because that's the only thing they can now afford; George had offered up his own savings to stabilize the building and loan.

I could go on, but I think you get the point: as in the film, we're in the midst of historic economic injustices rooted in the housing market—a situation rigged by not just one small town Henry Potter, but by a whole network of financial “experts.” And, as in the film, we're presented with a moral choice: do we make housing affordable, or do we let the market perpetually inflate rent, let it mandate that families are put out of their homes, let it drown homeowners whose mortgages are upside down?

Obviously, this is a huge crisis that must be addressed at national and international levels. However, Lexingtonians can attend to a small piece of the problem (and in a George Bailey-like way): support a local Affordable Housing Trust Fund (AHTF). Supporting a Lexington AHTF is projected to cost the average person \$15 per year. George floated much more than that to his Bedford Falls customers and neighbors when they rushed the building and loan. His sacrifice kept the entire community more stable and, in the long run, more prosperous.

Background on the AHTF

In 2008 BUILD (Building a United Interfaith Lexington through Direct Action) and other local organizations proposed an AHTF to rectify some of the housing inequities in Lexington. At BUILD's request, in spring 2008 then-Mayor Newberry agreed to put together a taskforce on an AHTF. The commission issued a report by September 2008.

As its yardstick, the AHTF Commission defined affordable housing as “housing that requires families and individuals to pay no more than thirty percent (30%) of their income for housing and housing related costs.”

Of the rental households in Fayette County, more than 45 percent currently pay more than one-third of their gross household income on rent. This means that these households are not affordably housed. Worse yet, 18 percent of renter households pay more than half of their income for housing, leaving these neighbors in danger of becoming homeless, according to the Central Kentucky Homelessness and Housing Initiative.

At a March 2011 council meeting, Commonwealth Economics, a firm hired by the Council to study the fiscal, economic, and social impact of an AHTF in Lexington, presented their study on the issue.

“Housing trust funds are dedicated sources of revenue to help low- and



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moderate-income people achieve affordable housing,” Commonwealth Economics writes in its report.

“In most cases, a government agency—usually an existing housing agency—administers the housing trust fund and awards grants and loans to local governments, non-profit developers, for-profit developers, and, in some cases, individuals, for a variety of low- and moderate-income housing activities.”

The study found that a local AHTF would, on average, produce approximately 470 housing opportunities each year, along with 150 new construction jobs and 320 rehabilitation projects.

The research also found that “more than 363 new jobs will be directly and indirectly supported by trust fund

investment.” Additionally, “more than \$43.3 million of direct, indirect and induced economic activity will be generated from trust fund investment.”

After almost five years, the volleying of the AHTF question between various Council committees, and much “studying,” Council is still generally squeamish about standing for affordable housing in Lexington. The councilmembers who have committed to this form of justice are Chris Ford (District 1) and Steve Kay (At-Large). If your councilmember is not on that list, you're encouraged to call his or her office and press the importance of an AHTF.

If you're enjoying your holidays in a warm and festive home, your neighbor should be, too.

DECEMBER 2012

River, cont.

Continued from page 1

and Recreation, purchased over 170 acres of the gorge area years ago to preserve its flora and fauna, with the ultimate goal of developing hiking trails for public use. Currently, however, the gorge is not open to the public, as the Nature Conservancy website states, “due to the sensitivity of the site and the lack of access.” The gorge is habitat for over 400 vascular plant species, including seven endangered species such as snow trillium, mountain lover, and water stitchwort, and two major caves in the gorge, known locally as Chrisman and Overstreet, provide maternity and hibernaculum sites for Gray and Indiana bats, both federally endangered species.

My explorations of the gorge predate Conservancy ownership, and since Danny and I ascribe to a zero-footprint policy when it comes to intrepid camping, we (mistakenly?) consider ourselves grandfathered in. Usually, we expect solitude when we enter the mouth, but on this particular evening, a group of campers have sprung their tents, three in all, on the downstream bank overlooking the confluence. We paddle past them and up the creek without exchanging glances, let alone greetings. Since both parties are technically breaking the law, there’s no need to bother with civil niceties. Plus, the light’s fading fast, we’re tired, and the need to make camp and chow negates all other considerations.

We find our usual campsite unoccupied—a sand and pebble shoal a half-mile up the creek. By the time we pitch the tent, gather wood, and get a fire going, the gorge is shrouded in night. We make a quick meal, our usual river rat stew, recline by the fire for an hour or so, and then call it quits on the day. Voices in the gurgling shoalwater call out names, and thinking they’re calling us, we follow and swiftly descend into deep sleep.

The morning’s unusually warm, and we boil water for coffee before the sun breaks above the gorge. For breakfast, we opt for oranges and granola bars, lighter than our usual fare of egg-fortified leftover stew, anticipating an invigorating hike up the gorge and not wanting to be weighted by anything heavier. Having made this hike numerous times before, we know precisely where to cross the creek as we zigzag upstream. While the morning is warm, and the sun encourages us along, the water is cold, and by our third crossing, where Leatherwood Creek splinters the gorge from the west, my shoes and pant legs are soaked and my feet numb. We rest on a massive sycamore trunk, fallen from the higher bank across a dry channel and in the midst of a small stand of papaws. Sadly, the fruit has long since fallen, but a wave of nostalgia floods over me, nonetheless, and I’m overtaken by a deep desire to bite into an overripe papaw. Just as I’m formulating the texture and taste in my imagination, rapt in possum daydream, I look up and notice Danny has started ahead without me.

We make it up to Jessamine Falls, or as I’ve always known the place, Overstreet Falls, named for the old man who owned the property—the descendant of Henry Overstreet, a Revolutionary War veteran, who settled in the vicinity. The falls are dry but for a small dribble through a mossy beard high up on the lip. At sixty feet, the falls are impressive in the spring or winter and have carved out a large bowl around which we skirt and ascend to a trail leading to Overstreet Cave.

The most impressive part of the cave is not really the cave itself; it’s the cathedral-like overhang. The cave proper has a relatively small mouth and is clearly

marked with Nature Conservancy signage warning against entrance on account of the bats. Given the frighteningly rapid spread of White-Nose Syndrome—a fungal infection related to massive die-outs among bat populations from New York to Tennessee—it’s no wonder the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service recommends suspension of all cave activities. Most of my speleological impulses fizzled out long ago, although I still nurse a healthy anthropological fascination with cave mouths, particularly along the Kentucky where prehistoric humans left their crude tools, kitchen midden, and mortal remains.

We steer clear of the cave proper and angle up to the left beneath the overhang. Here the shelter reaches back into the cliff, the floor inclining in thin layers. Thirty feet up, a massive column of eroded limestone marks an equally massive window peering out over the gorge and providing a view of the cliff-top

the punch, is almost an affront. Strange, to covet places. I suppose I’ve come to covet the entire Kentucky River watershed, having devoted so much time and energy to paddling it over the last two years, and look at everyone we encounter with a keening stink-eye.

We round Ox Bow Bend and enter the long horseshoe around Handy’s Bend, also known as Seven Mile Bottom. Anyone who can read mileage on a map can see the bottom around Handy’s Bend is a far cry short of seven miles. It’s only three and a half at most. Locals, such as myself, call this Fox Bend after the large estate, Fox Bend Farm, that once comprised over a thousand acres atop the palisade, including all “seven” of the three and a half miles of bottomland. The Poe family, who managed a foxhunting club on the property, once owned (and named) Fox Bend, but now it’s owned and managed by the Bluegrass Sportsman’s League. Today

fanning the silt-covered shallows. The only thought I collect repeats over in mind: “Hold your fire! We surrender, dammit.” But the guns keep blasting away.

River-Time-Travel

The noise pollution hounds us for the next hour. Then suddenly blessed silence. The guns of Fox Bend speak no more. A truce perhaps? Lunch, smoke, beer break? We avail ourselves of the quietude and climb to an overhang a mile downriver from Boat Hollow. Back in the mid-60s, Clyde Bunch, husband of Garrett Alcorn’s oldest daughter, Mildred, and High Bridge resident-historian, archeologist, astronomer, riverine philosopher “poked” around here and unearthed a human skull, which he dutifully turned over to the archives at University of Kentucky. Rumor has it the skull was in the range of 8,000 years old. Whatever its age, indigenous peoples more than likely used this cave from prehistory to European contact and settlement in the valley. The cave mouth is impressive—a perfect arch opening where the sheer limestone palisade gives way to steep, wooded talus. Its parabolic mouth reaches nearly twenty feet from floor to ceiling, the interior forty feet or so with ceiling gradually sloping to floor. A low, horizontal crevice runs cruciform at the rear of the main room, the right wing dead-ending and the left extending into damp, unexplored darkness. Sifting through the pit and mound of Clyde’s original dig, I’ve found broken projectiles, pottery, and mussel bones with edges sharpened from repeated use cutting meat, skinning hides perhaps. After scouting the cave and turning over a few choice rocks, we descend to boats, make way toward Bowman’s Bend and High Bridge.

The palisades reach up again on the Jessamine County side, opposite Bowman’s. Seven Sisters, as they’re locally known, rise 300 feet, a series of scrolling columns framing a flat face of limestone extending down 100 feet to the treetops and talus. As we round the bend and face into the sun, a stiff breeze kicks up, and before we reach Georgie Horton’s old fishcamp and the two-mile straightaway to the community of High Bridge, we’re paddling against fierce headwind. We chop along near the bank, avoiding the main channel and erratic waves. So near the end of another journey, though, we feel no urgency

to make time and we drift, detached from the world above, at the end of the Kentucky’s major deflection, what Jillson identifies as “an obvious abnormality of the drainage pattern,” constituting a “great bend to the southwest.” Due to Cretaceous uplift, the Kentucky began to pool back on itself in the vicinity of Boonesborough, and during the early Tertiary Period redirected its course southwest, following the uplift’s concomitant fault zone, until it finally breached a col into its primary southern tributary, the Dix River. From the present-day confluence of the two rivers at High Bridge to the mouth of Elkhorn Creek, the Kentucky follows the Lower Cretaceous channel of the Dix River—a monumental stream piracy. In all, this deflection took somewhere in the ballpark of 30 million years, short work in geologic terms.

The day is still bright, the October air is warm despite the wind, and we’re content, like the river, with slow, steady progress. We pass a man and woman in a canoe, paddling upstream, prevailing wind at their back. I laugh to myself at the prospect of river travel as time travel and turn just in time to watch them blow round Bowman’s Bend beneath the unflinching gaze of the Seven Sisters, disappear into the surface, autumn’s reds and yellows banked against current, and the bottomless reflection of blue sky.



View from Clyde’s Cave. Photo by Wesley Houpp.

meadows and woods across the creek. We linger on a ledge beside the overlook, taking in the sunny smell of autumn, the air filled with orgiastic but innocuous clouds of insects and the hushed gurgle of water coursing over stones far below. Danny follows a ledge around the rear of the overhang, takes a seat in the crevice, and starts singing in a low voice.

*“Ay,” said the little leather-winged bat,
“I’ll tell you the reason that,
The reason that I fly by night
Is because I lost my heart’s delight...”*

Handy’s Bend

The noontime sun has warmed the bottomlands considerably by the time we reach camp. I change into shorts and a dry pullover. We disassemble camp in a matter of a few minutes, load boats, and float away on the current. The campers at the mouth have vacated as well, and we’re glad for it. Having snubbed them last night, we weren’t much interested in small talk this morning either. Normally, perhaps anywhere else, I’m more than happy to introduce myself, chat about this or that, but we weren’t expecting to encounter other campers here. It was unprecedented. Remote is the essential characteristic of the gorge, and seeing anyone else enjoying its gorgeous solitudes and privileged views, particularly anyone else who’s already beaten you to

the property mostly serves the needs of Lexington professionals with guns, who travel south on the weekends to unwind and “unleaden.” From the river, their volleys echo down the palisades and put the languid paddler in mind of military conflagration.

Around the point of Handy’s Bend, Boat Hollow enters with a small trickle and towhead on the Garrard County side. Scattered on the talus above, the remains of Sprout Horton’s fishcamp remind me of an earlier, less violent form of recreation: men shirking responsibilities and trundling tackle, bait, and other “supplies” off for a weekend of roughing it. Sprout, a life-long resident of High Bridge, KY, built the camp—a small shack partially dug into the talus, partially balanced over the bank—back in the early 40s, but all that’s left now are a few rusty reminders: bedsprings, some rotten boards, the door of an old iron stove. We stop and stretch legs on the towhead. Meanwhile, the battle rages across the river at the sportsman’s club. It must have been a tranquil place back in Sprout’s time. Not a place for banter but a place to collect thoughts. I can imagine a group of men, reclined on the towhead, fishing poles wedged in driftwood forks stuck in the muddy waterline, no words but a bottle passed between them, catfish on a stringer

“The commission will be tasked with examining the issues and concerns of the most fortunate of Fayette Urban County (FUC) residents and recommend needed changes to city council.”

DECEMBER 2012

21c, cont.

Continued from page 1

Athletics (\$50,000), Toyota (\$25,000), Kentucky Utilities (KU) parent company LG&E (\$25,000) and Mayor Jim Gray (\$15,500).

And then there's this: Brown and Wilson hired Greenberg to 21c a mere three weeks before the Rupp Commission issued its visionary report.

Leveraging failure: Museum Plaza

Greenberg's tie to the Rupp Task Force is among several items left intentionally fuzzy by local media and city leaders. Most glaring has been the lack of reporting on the failed Louisville urban development Museum Plaza.

In 2007, Brown, Wilson and Greenberg entered into a business relationship as lead investors in Museum Plaza, a mixed-use urban development. Situated on a plot of gifted land nearby the Ohio River, Museum Plaza was to incorporate a hotel, art museum, private lofts, retail, dining and the University of Louisville MFA program. It was 21c by another name—only massively larger. Think CentrePointe, and then Louisville-size it.

And like CentrePointe, the \$480 million development project has never happened. Land was purchased and bulldozed, a gigantic skyscraper was proposed that the city mayor deemed out of scale, the necessity of creative public financing was stressed by the developers, a market crashed, and the project has since languished amid calls, some successful and some not, for fresh infusions of money.

Some of that money has included a 2007 state bill authorizing \$135 million to fund it (HB 549). Another was \$3.7 million in liens filed for nonpayment by two separate contractors in 2009. The most recent was a 2010 gambit to secure a \$100 million “Section 108” loan from the federal department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

Fuck the poor: Section 108

Section 108 loans emanate from HUD's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program. Described as “one of the most potent and important public investment tools that HUD offers to local governments,” the low-interest loans are intended to help finance projects that primarily benefit “low- to moderate-income persons.”

In Section 108 loans, city and state governments operate as pass-throughs for the entity receiving the loan. Loan limits are capped at five times a government's allotment of CDBG funds. Thus, Lexington's current \$1.9 million of CDBG funds allow it to leverage close to \$10 million in Section 108 loans. Though loans can pass through to private entities

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Mayer announces People's Commission on the Rich

*Fayette Urban County, Kentucky
December 4, 2012*

North of Center Editor Danny Mayer today announced that he is soliciting nominations for a People's Commission on the Rich. The commission will be tasked with examining the issues and concerns of the most fortunate of Fayette Urban County (FUC) residents and recommend needed changes to city council.

Mayer is forming the commission because of a number of recent reports related to the rich and wealthy, including concerns raised about CentrePointe, the impact of rich people on public access to Phoenix Park, overbuilding at the Kentucky Horse Park, and issues related to the development of the Rupp Opportunity Zone and nearby Distillery District.

“Our community has a long record of reaching out to help those who need lots of money. We can be proud of many of those efforts, including the Kentucky Horse Park and Rupp Arena,” Mayer said. “But we also have ongoing challenges. This is a complex issue. It's clear we need to step back and take stock ... to examine long-term challenges and outstanding needs.”

This year alone, the city will dedicate over 60% of its lending capacity in the federal low-income “Section 108” program in order to attract a downtown boutique hotel that will charge over \$170 for one night's stay. Additionally, the city has contributed over \$20 million to the purchase of rural property development rights, which often directly benefit Fayette Urban County's higher income agricultural and horse farm owners. In the current Mayor's budget, the county will pay \$1.25 million to begin Rupp Arena renovations that will primarily create amenities (suites, presidential sitting area, bigger convention center) beneficial to the more- and most fortunate.

In addition to evaluating the economic stress the rich place on the county, the commission will also examine the cronyism that plagues many rich FUCer communities. “Several issues have arisen lately that suggest we should get our best problem-solvers around the table and come up with new ideas to make sure we're doing our best for all of our citizens,” Mayer said. “We must ask the question, *Is that goal possible with the concentrated wealth and cronyism we have in this county?*”

To that end, the commission will examine the long-term debts and infrastructure improvements necessary to house and entertain those who are rich, and it will analyze how these costs get passed on to the community at large. There is an urgency, Mayer declared, but also a need for broad perspectives.

“Horse FUCers, coal FUCers, the Religious Rich, the 4%ers, the Creatively Rich. These are just some of the many categories of rich that exist here in Fayette Urban County—and this doesn't even touch the large body of social science the commission might wish to consider: psychoses and traumas, business knowledge and habits, hierarchies, environmental and democratic impacts, drug use,” Mayer observed. “The avenues of inquiry are as limitless as their debt capacity. There is much serious work to be done.”

Mayer wants to hear from more than just the advocates for the very wealthy. “People with no homes, workers at non-profits and adjuncts teaching at schools who have seen their funding slashed,” he said in describing the demographics of potential commission members. “Public sanitation and safety workers, veterans groups, disc golf players, concerned working class laborers, unemployed artists, tenured faculty members, immigrants of all documents—even the rich are encouraged to apply.”

Anyone interested in serving on Mayer's People's Commission on the Rich should contact Danny Mayer's place by snail mail, c/o North of Center, 430 N. MLK, Lexington, KY, 40508, or by email, noceditors@yahoo.com. Enclose a 1-2 paragraph description of your interest, general availability and qualifications (if any). Preference given to snail mail applications. Deadline to express interest is January 25.

such as 21c, they are backstopped, ultimately, by the city, which must dedicate its current and future CDBG funds as security for the loan.

21c owners have demanded \$6 million, or 60 percent of the city's lending capacity, in Section 108 loans. As proposed, the art hotel will pay only the interest for the first six years of the

twenty-year loan, meaning that while 21c will receive needed capital infusions for its renovation of First National Building, the city will be stuck for the foreseeable future with limited leverage for other 108 loans.

Here's “the low income community” his company has invested in here: an iconic building on Main Street, on the

corner of Upper, adjacent to Cheapside Plaza—acre for acre, perhaps the most valuable land in town.

Here's the low income jobs that our public loans will fund: chambermaids, dishwashers, bellhops, mostly jobs designed to cater to the needs of those who can afford to drop in for a stay at a modern art hotel.

dead prez, cont.

Continued from page 2

present. “What If The Lights Go Out,” for example, is eerily prescient of the devastation of Hurricane Sandy. It begins with a scene of two men stranded (on a rooftop?) as a helicopter passes overhead and one yells in vain hope of being rescued. The other man says “don't do that man / you gon get shot ... they aint comin to help us man / we got to help our motherfuckin self.” In comes stic.man, telling us how to do just that—to be ready for whatever: storms, financial collapse, power outages, martial law. (As I write, there are some still without power in Red Hook, NY, more than a month after Superstorm Sandy.) He tells us what to truly value: “organization, communication / clarity family solidarity,” adding, “The dollar bill is just a piece of paper / when the lights go out it aint gon save you.” A jab, perhaps, not only at the petit bourgeois chasers of the “American Dream,” but also the bling-bling money-worshipping rappers DP have regularly called out in past songs like “Hip Hop” and “Malcolm Garvey Huey.” In this song and a few others, M-1 brings an old-school hip hop sound to his raps, reminiscent of Grandmaster Flash in “The Message,” that grounds the electronic sounds in a hip-hop tradition. “This organized humanity / is borderline

insanity, but / don't panic, be cool / no code to the streets and no rules.”

In “Dirty White Girl,” dead prez warn all clean-living black revolutionary gentlemen to stay well away from the drug-addled white women who apparently frequent music industry circles trying to ensnare a sugar daddy. These toxic types allegedly hide their “white-power politic” beneath a haze of intoxication, malnutrition, and Lindsay Lohan-style antics. “Devil's daughter / I don't want her / She'll have you strung out on the corner.” While at first I was a bit turned off by the song, which seemed mean-spirited toward these addicted women, subsequent listens reveal that the cuts are more directed at the substance abuse, the lack of regard they have for themselves, and their attempt to drag others into the pit of addiction. The song and attitude also reflect the Black Nationalist tradition of distrusting white women (and men) who try to connect with participants of black revolutionary movements. At the end of the song, dead prez acknowledge the prejudice of this tradition by having the computer voice recite the textbook statement: “The concept of race has no scientifically proven biological or genetic validity. It is a social construct that has been used as a tool of oppression for centuries.”

One of my favorites songs from the album, “No Way as the Way” alludes to a Zen Buddhist notion of “The Way.” The

track opens with stic.man offering a narrative description his journey of spiritual discovery as a young person, from an early rejection of the Church (“Is it okay to question the pastor? / Was it passed down from the slave master?”), to an exploration of wisdom traditions of the African and Asian diaspora which coincided with training in martial arts and pursuit of proper fitness and nutrition, subjects he has earlier described in his excellent singles “The Way of Life” and “Back on My Regimen.” In “No Way as the Way,” the spiritual outlook evolves into one of principled, practical living: “My religion is Life and it's just as valid / I strive for balance.” But stic.man acknowledges that this is only his journey, and we must learn to tolerate, or better, to celebrate, each person's unique path. As he sings in the chorus: “My way might not be your way / But it's okay / it's alright.”

In the next verse, M-1 cuts in with some of the Big Questions: “I gotta admit I don't know / In the end which way it's gon go /... / Is there even a master plan / an unseen hand that's god or man? / Some say that's sacreligious / same folks tellin us lies about Christmas.” In a masterful line that expresses his solidarity and never fails to bring a tear to my eye: “They say God'll take care of it, but you a terrorist if you say the same thing in Arabic.” The magnificent verse ends with a nod to the powerful revolutionary message found in

slavery-era spirituals and the rich history of resistance: “Wade in the water and find out when Miss Tubman and Nat Turner ran for my freedom and headed for the border.”

There is so much more to say about the songs on this album, but I'm running out of time and space. Don't miss “Learning Growing Changing,” a paean to participatory education over jazzy drums. “The Awakening” features the enchanting vocals of an anonymous African woman and the obligatory spoken word poem, this time delivered by Umar Bin Hassan of The Last Poets. And one of the jewels of the album, “Time Travel” is a vocoded electro-hiphop holistic pump-up song that will have you strapping on your exercise sneakers and dusting off your meditation cushion at the same time. Play this one loud and don't be afraid to dance.

Let me tell you something. There might be haters out there who diss *Information Age* for its departure from what we have come to expect from dead prez. I say, haters gonna hate. As for me, I may have gotten *Information Age* for free off the Internet, but dammit I'm going over to CD Central ASAP to buy a copy—to show respect and support for the artists, but also to make it easier to spread this masterpiece to friends and comrades. This is proper propaganda; the timing could not have been better.



DECEMBER 2012

Happy anniversary, Citizens United!

By Joy Arnold

Record amounts of money spent in November's election did not always reap as much as its sowers hoped. There were some glorious victories for the rest of us in spite of money. Across the country in over 150 cities, for example, residents had the opportunity to vote on measures calling for an end to the doctrines of corporate constitutional rights and money as free speech. In every single town the vote was supportive, often by overwhelming margins. It passed in ultra conservative Pueblo, Colorado, where the city newspaper came out against it, as well as in liberal Boston.

These ballot initiatives follow the 173 municipal governments across the country that have passed such resolutions and 55 organizations that have endorsed the work of Move to Amend, a national coalition of groups building grassroots support for a two-pronged Constitutional amendment that declares corporations are not people and money

is not speech, and that therefore both can be regulated.

Limitless money in our elections gives us commercials that make us sick and mislead voters. But it is after the election that the real damage gets done, when citizen lobbyists' voices, even those of small contributors, often get drowned out by those who gave millions. That's what happens when money is considered speech. As regulations are written and policies established, lobbyists from those major contributors are sitting in offices on Capitol Hill, where they are dictating what can be included and what must be left out.

Stopping limitless corporate money is, indeed, a part of the battle to take our government back, but it does not go far enough. The Court has already deemed that corporations are people. Any amendment must also undo well over a century of illegitimate precedents that have increased corporate power at the expense of a citizen-centered democracy.

Here is Thomas Jefferson writing in the 1780s at the dawn of the republic:

"I hope we shall crush... in its birth the aristocracy of our moneyed corporations, which dare already to challenge our government to a trial of strength and bid defiance to the laws of our country."

Since Jefferson's time, corporations have undergone a tremendous makeover. When Jefferson warned of the damage corporations could do to the government he and his colleagues were creating, states granted charters to businesses that wanted to incorporate. These charters set forth the one business the company would perform, the geographic location in which it would do business and the length of time the charter would be valid. When the business completed its stated purpose, the charter expired. To continue after the date of expiration, the corporation had to re-apply to the state legislature. Further, each corporation's purpose had to be for the public good—not, as a 1919 Michigan case defined its purpose, as "primarily for the profit of the stockholders."

Initially charters gave privileges to corporations, whatever privileges the state wanted to give. They were not given rights that were given to natural people in the governing documents of the nation.

Right by right, however, the high Court, without any legislative action and sometimes without adherence even to normal procedural practice, has ascribed rights intended for people in six of our Constitutional amendments to corporations, which, as Justice Stevens said in his *Citizens United* dissent, "have no consciences, no beliefs, no feelings, no thoughts, no desires. Corporations help structure and facilitate the activities of human beings, to be sure, and their 'personhood' often serves a useful legal fiction. But they are not themselves members of 'We the People' by whom and for whom our Constitution was established."

January 21 will mark the third anniversary of the Supreme Court's decision in *Citizens United vs. Federal Election*

Continued on page 8

The corporate Constitution: the first 200 years in court

The U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights created government and rights of, for and by the people. Nearly since their creation, however, these documents have been under assault by corporate interests, which have attempted to connect corporate rights to citizen rights. Writing during the early republic, Thomas Jefferson warned "I hope we shall crush... in its birth the aristocracy of our moneyed corporations, which dare already to challenge our government to a trial of strength and bid defiance to the laws of our country."

With apologies to Mr. Jefferson, here's a condensed walk through two centuries of court cases that have incrementally given corporations the powers allotted to the people.

1803

Supreme Court rules itself "supreme"; Congress is silent, thereby allowing the Court to make law, regardless of how we read the separation of powers.

Mabury v. Madison

1886

Without hearing arguments on the issue of "corporate personhood" in a case about railroad taxes, Chief Justice Morrison Waite, says to his clerk, a former railroad president, "The court does not wish to hear argument on the question whether the provision in the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution, which forbids a State to deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws, applies to these corporations. We are all of the opinion that it does." The clerk drafts the statement into a headnote of the case, and it has since been used as precedent.

Santa Clara County v. Southern Pacific Railroad

1893

Court rules the Fifth Amendment's "nor be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law," pertains to corporations.

Noble v. Union River Logging

1905

The Court uses the Constitution to

invalidate government regulation of corporations. From then until the 1930s about 200 regulations are invalidated under "substantive due process."

Lochner v. New York

1906

The Court gives Fourth Amendment "search and seizure" protections to corporations over Justice Harlan's strong dissent: "[T]he power of the government, by its representatives, to look into the books, records and papers of a corporation of its own creation, to ascertain whether the corporation has obeyed or is defying the law, will be greatly curtailed, if not destroyed."

Hale v. Henke

1908

Court gives corporations Sixth Amendment right to trial by jury in criminal matter.

Armor Packing Co. v. U.S.

1919

A Michigan Court says, "A business corporation is organized and carried out

primarily for the profit of the stockholders. The powers of the directors are to be employed for that end." Thus, "stockholder primacy" erases historic public good requirement for corporations.

Dodge v. Ford Motor Co.

1936

Court gives corporations First Amendment freedom of speech rights, allowing a newspaper to sell advertising without paying taxes on the income from it.

Grosjean v. American Press

1970

Court gives Seventh Amendment right to jury trial in a civil case to corporations.

Ross v. Bernhard

1976

Court rules political money is equivalent to speech.

Buckley v. Valeo

Court protects commercial speech; advertising is now free speech.

Virginia Board of Pharmacy v. Virginia Consumer Council.

Ayn Rand memorial to be constructed in D.C. The leek: a satirical take

By Horace Heller Hedley, IV

The familiar tour of Washington D.C.'s great monuments to our common past—the Lincoln Memorial, the Jefferson Memorial, the Washington Monument—will soon feature a new stop. The new Ayn Rand Memorial, a tribute to the influential Russian émigré novelist and political philosopher, is due to begin construction in 2014.

Rand, author of the bestselling novel *Atlas Shrugged* and the philosophical work *The Virtue of Selfishness*, taught that self-interest is the highest moral purpose of life and that any government aid to citizens weakens them and society. Her philosophy provided a foundation for the American neo-conservative movement beginning in the 1980s and undergirded the policies of the George W. Bush administration. Her many admirers include former Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan, Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas, conservative commentators Glenn Beck and Rush Limbaugh, and Kentucky Senator Rand Paul.

But the driving force behind the new memorial was former vice-presidential candidate Paul Ryan. Mr. Ryan, esteemed by the Tea Party and widely respected for intellectual and personal integrity, is seen as the spearhead of the contemporary fiscal and social conservative movement. Mr. Ryan's admiration for the works of Rand is well known. Mr. Ryan told the Atlas Society in 2005, "The reason I got involved in

public service, by and large... would be Ayn Rand." Three years ago he credited Rand with a prescient understanding of modern American society: "It's as if we're living in an Ayn Rand novel right now. I think Ayn Rand did the best job of anybody to build a moral case for capitalism, and that morality of capitalism is under assault."

During the vice-presidential campaign, however, Mr. Ryan's adulation of Rand was more muted—perhaps reflecting political concerns that Rand's abject contempt for Christianity and staunch pro-abortion stance could alienate the Republican base. Soon after his nomination for the VP spot, Mr. Ryan stated, "I enjoyed her novels, but I reject her philosophy. It's an atheist philosophy. It reduces human interactions down to mere contracts, and it is antithetical to my worldview. If somebody is going to try to paste a person's view on epistemology to me, then give me Thomas Aquinas."

With the unsuccessful election campaign behind him, and no groundswell of support for a Thomas Aquinas memorial, Mr. Ryan and fellow conservatives openly advocated more public recognition of Rand's work in the nation's capital. Admirers in Congress first proposed placing quotations from Rand's work on appropriate federal buildings.

"The only way a government can be of service to national prosperity is by keeping its hands off" was to adorn the Federal Reserve Building.

"One puts oneself above all and crushes everything in one's way to get the best for oneself. Fine!" was to appear at the security gate in front of the Department of Homeland Security.

The entrance of The House of Representatives would display "I do feel real hatred when I hear somebody say he believes in 'the middle of the road.'"

Embolded by a positive reception for this initiative, Mr. Ryan, along with 37 co-sponsors, officially proposed the Ayn Rand Memorial. Some critics expressed concern that the \$150 million project would add to the burgeoning national debt; others noted that Rand herself would object to any such government-sponsored initiative. Mr. Ryan dismissed these concerns, responding that Rand showed sufficient flexibility of thought that she accepted both Social Security benefits and Medicare when needy and stricken by lung disease at the end of her life. He added that the funds were to be re-allocated from Head Start resources—an arrangement highly consistent with Objectivist philosophy.

Not surprisingly, the Rand Memorial, like her controversial work, is not without detractors. Attacking the proposal, Rep. Dennis Kucinich (D-Ohio) quoted the late Gore Vidal, a well-known intellectual and career-long nemesis of Rand: "Ayn Rand's 'philosophy,' is nearly perfect in its immorality, which makes the size of her audience all the more ominous and symptomatic as we enter a curious new phase in our society. Moral values

are in flux. The muddy depths are being stirred by new monsters and witches from the deep. Trolls walk the American night. Caesars are stirring in the Forum. There are storm warnings ahead."

Designs for the Rand Memorial, to be located eight blocks from the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial, are currently being submitted. One design, inspired by the Lincoln Memorial, would include Rand seated in an armchair holding a cigarette, her intense gaze fixed on the viewer. A more modernist design features an obelisk, suggesting a finger stretching skyward to evoke the unfailing aspiration of the human spirit, towering over the poor neighborhoods of Washington D.C.

Though the design of the structure is still under consideration, legislation has already established the inscription of the memorial:

I am done with the monster of "We,"
The word of serfdom, of plunder, of misery, falsehood and shame.

And now I see the face of god, and I raise this god over the earth,

This god whom men have sought since men came into being,

This god who will grant them joy and peace and pride.

This god, this one word: "I."



Opinion

Project Appleseed

Dear editor,

I would like to invite readers to take the Project Appleseed pledge of school and community involvement. I am a student at the University of Kentucky and sort of fell into a public advocacy class. Lucky for me, the class provided a friendly push toward advocating for the betterment of our schools. After working in an after school program for two years and taking a few child development classes, I decided that I was very much in support of school reform. When an assignment arose for finding a live advocacy campaign, it was obvious that I'd focus on schools.

But exactly what part of school needs reforming? If you were to ask me a few weeks ago, my answer would be, "Everything!" After doing some research, though, I came across Project Appleseed, which emphasizes the importance of community and parent involvement in education. It makes a lot of sense. Yes, many public school systems could use improvement in the areas of curriculum, format of the school day, teacher training and support programs, and many more aspects of education. But if all this changes, and there is no increase in interaction between our schools and our communities, will the change turn out to be in vain? If parents do not take charge and involve themselves with their child's education, what the child learns will be confined within the walls of a school building. Communities need to

embrace the school system as an extension of the community itself, so that children will know education goes beyond the school itself.

Project Appleseed's philosophy is that communities and schools need to work together to create a healthy learning environment for children, establish training and support programs for educators, and emphasize nutrition and fitness. Their system is represented by "Six Slices of Parent Involvement": volunteering, parenting, community, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with community. "Volunteering" involves their system of recruiting parents and citizens to devote at least five hours a semester to their school district. The pledge for volunteering gives a wide range of options from clerical work to helping supervise field trips. There are even options for people who have special skills such as carpentry, gardening, and photography. This puts emphasis on the fact that there is a place for everybody.

Project Appleseed's involvement with "parenting" includes researching ways to help families engage with their children's education. A large part of this is providing families with resources to help with homework and other school-related projects or activities. This particular slice seems very important to me. As a person who works with children—let me revise that, as a college-educated person who works with children—I have found much difficulty in figuring

out even kindergarten-level assignments. Yes, I know what rhymes with "suit," and which number comes before three. However, when a paper includes only a limited amount of pictures and words and no directions, even the wisest of adults can be left stumped. This leaves out the fact that not all parents are "the wisest of adults." However, that shouldn't hinder their ability to help their children with homework. Schools should provide resources to families that will help them to work effectively with their children outside of school. The "learning at home" slice is very much tied to the idea of children being able to extend learning beyond the school building and school hours.

"Decision making" emphasizes the fact that parents and the community should be involved with the decision making process within the school system. This flows freely with the idea that the community itself should be an umbrella that encompasses the education system rather than a separate entity from the education system. In Lexington alone, there are many programs that help our children and community, such as the YMCA and Big Brothers, Big Sisters. Project Appleseed advocates for joining these programs with our school buildings. A great example of this is the YMCA and Parks and Recreation after school programs that many of Lexington's schools house. The children who attend these programs also attend classes outside of school

hours and camps during the summer. They learn early on to become a part of their community. Project Appleseed advocates for involving community, and I believe this is the most important part of their mission. Not a "kid person"? That's no reason to be uninvolved in our public schools. Our educational system, whether we like it or not, cultivates our future community. So maybe you aren't a kid person, but chances are, if you're an avid reader of this paper, you do care about your neighborhood.

I would like to inject that I am not an employee of, or directly affiliated with, Project Appleseed, and I only recently began my journey as an advocate for their campaign. I would also add that I do not particularly care whether or not reading this letter makes you jump on the Project Appleseed website and whole-heartedly but absentmindedly sign their pledge. My hope is that anyone who reads this letter will simply think about what education means to you and what it can mean for the community. Decide whether or not you agree with what I've said, and take a stand. I implore you to make the decision to become involved with your community. And in that, I hope you decide that making a commitment to our children and their future is a very important aspect of that involvement.

Thank you,
Amelia Conley, concerned student and community advocate

Letters to the editor

Veteran homeless

In reflecting on hurricane Sandy, I started wondering about all the homeless that live in the old tunnels in New York City. Did NYC get them evacuated? How many of our homeless brethren did we lose to this storm? Will their deaths be counted?

So far, not counting homeless deaths due to Sandy, we've lost 36, 897 (Nava, November 2012). Since 6% of the homeless population are veterans who served our country with honor to protect our freedom, how are their deaths treated?

It would be wonderful to find housing for all of them. Obama fought for and got HUD funding for veterans, but he knows this isn't enough to solve the problem that exist amongst our veterans. However, due to severe mental illness which they've developed while in service to this country Our Afghan War and early Iraq War veterans have even more risk of developing severe mental health disorders, which prevents them from reaching out to get help, assistance, and being able to maintain housing.

When you consider this number, 36,897 souls lost while homeless and 6% being veterans, this means close to 3,000 veterans have died while being homeless. So how do our cities/towns treat these honorable veterans' deaths?

If their families can be located and want to take responsibility for the burial, do the families know they're entitled to a military funeral? If the family can't be found or don't want to or can't afford burial, do our cities/towns work with their local V.A. to see that these men and women who served their country get the military burial with honor that they so richly deserve? Would V.A. regulations even allow this?

If we can't reach them before their death, we can at least restore dignity to them in their death by giving them the honor they earned when we bury them.
Robin Osgood, Rose Street, Lexington, KY

Walking while female

I hear you ("Shaming women," November 2012). I too am female and live and used to work on the North end. During

my tenure as a drafter for Windstream, currently housed in the building that used to be K-Mart on new Circle, I frequently used Lime, N. Broadway, etc., for my lunch time running grounds.

One day, I was walking back to work down N. Lime after an exhausting run for a pregnant lady. I don't know if it was my running attire or generally disheveled appearance that signaled to some strange older guy in a minivan that I might be "working" the North Limestone area, but he shouted out the window asking if I wanted a ride. I waved him off, "no thanks, I can run" and kept on walking with a quickened pace. Really, I couldn't run anymore... for some reason I was spent. Evidently, my decline didn't convince him because he turned around, slowed up, stopped and waited as I walked on by. I didn't have mace or a gun, but I had a phone, so I took it out and dialed one of my co-workers to let her know my distressing situation and where I could be located.

Continued on page 8

Weed, cont.

Continued from page 1

Nevertheless, the Department of Justice, which must frequently run out of things to do, has not stopped harassing cannabis dispensaries in Colorado and California (or libraries in the latter. Who knew that lending e-books infringed on the rights of the blind?). Attorney General Eric Holder has licensed and defended the raids because said dispensaries violated state laws. The DOJ therefore skipped notices or fines or citations and went straight for handcuffs. Like Clinton, Obama does not seem to care for cannabis either.

Or perhaps President Obama's stiff silence on the issue has other origins. The first black president may want to avoid the amended title of "first pro-pot president." But by avoiding a stereotype one may as well be deferring to it. Decades of government campaigns against cannabis have not resulted in significant decreases in the drug's usage in the United States, though it has successfully demonized it as a vice of the lowest class. To Nixon, cannabis and laziness went hand in hand: "At least with liquor I don't lose motivation."

Suppose that, right here in the Bluegrass, one were to distribute a survey that read: "Should marijuana be legalized?" The response would be overwhelmingly negative, the consequence of a stigma that was fashionable eight presidents ago. But every statistician knows that a change in wording corresponds to a change in responses, so imagine a survey that instead read: "Cannabis indica and cannabis sativa are naturally occurring species of plant that, when ingested or smoked, are known to produce euphoric and drowsy effects. To date, no one has ever died from consumption of the plant, and it has verified medical usages. Should this drug be legalized?" The survey would surely gather more positive responses than the previous, suggesting a referendum of this sort may be exactly what is needed to combat the stigma stapled to cannabis.

Or, what is needed are more casual users of the drug to surface, showing that they are not all basement-dwelling stoners. What is needed are more women like "Jennifer Pelham"—highly successful individuals who enjoy a few hits of the peace pipe after a 12 hour day. But even

she has to use a pseudonym when admitting to her cannabis use or risk the loss of her enviable position as a corporate attorney. Likewise, for the sake of political correctness President Obama had to claim, like Clinton, that he was "not proud" of having used cannabis. And were it not for a GQ article thrusting the matter before the eye of the public, the story of Rand Paul's bizarre homage to a deified bong named "Aqua Buddha" might never have come to light.

Presidents and politicians peddle a double standard when it comes to substance use. Every politician affirms states' rights, but, oddly, this position tends to exempt drug policy. When things cannot get done, President Obama's reliance on executive orders has earned him criticism from the right. But imagine if he used it to remove cannabis from the list of controlled substances. He would be using a presidential power to restore a lost liberty originally allotted to the states and individuals. In absence of an executive order or taming of the DOJ, Obama, at the very least, ought to offer a statement regarding what his administration will (or will not) do given the legalization of cannabis in two states.

North of Center is a periodical, a place,

and a perspective.

Editor & Publisher

Danny Mayer

Associate editor

Beth Connors-Manke

Contributors

Michael Benton

Andrew Battista

Dylan Blount

Captain Commanokers

Dave Cooper

Stacey Earley

Marcus Flores

Kurt Gohde

John Hennen

Horace Heller Headley, IV

Wes Houpp

Michael Marchman

Cannon-Marie Green Milby

Kenn Minter

Sunny Montgomery

Kremena Todorova

Address correspondence, including advertising inquiries and letters to the editor, to noceditors@yahoo.com.

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I'm not from here

Kenn Minter



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Letters, cont.

Continued from page 7

The man decided I wasn't worth the hassle, I guess, and drove off. Golden caravan, maybe 2000 model? This was at least 4 years ago, but I won't forget it.

This wasn't the first time I've felt threatened in a similar way by a man driving down a street, I on my feet. I used to live in Louisville and walking around at night in the highlands isn't free of these kind of encounters.

Shannon, web post

Looking for topless mountains

Hello, I am on the search for the Topless Mountains are Obscene bumper sticker ("Outside the governor's office," June 2012). I am looking for the one that has the topless mountains that resemble a female's breast. I can make donation or buy it. Any info would be appreciated.

Michael Cash, online

Author responds,

I got the rectangular shaped sticker from a woman from Louisville who was from the Unitarian Church or progressive Catholic Church. She was with a group lobbying in Frankfort last spring. You might ask Dave Cooper who is an organizer/spokesman with the Bluegrass Sierra Club and his own Mountaintop Removal Roadshow. Feel free to ask for more help if this is not enough.

Salubrious Soup

Christopher Epling



Citizens, cont.

Continued from page 6

Commission that granted corporations the First Amendment (human citizen) right to unlimited use of money as free political speech. This year the anniversary falls on the same day as Martin Luther King, Jr. Day and the inauguration. Both will

garner more attention than the decision.

Many of us will commemorate January 21 by continuing our grassroots organizing efforts to show the 99% how corporations have taken government created of, by and for the people from us—and how we can reclaim it.

Consider making it your New Year's resolution to bring your networks, your

skills, your talents to Central Kentucky Move to Amend. Work with us to reclaim our government and create participatory democracy. There's a movement afoot, but it needs soldiers like you to step up and push.

Find us at movetoamend.org by selecting "Kentucky," or email us at central-ky@movetoamend.org