

NORTH OF CENTER

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FREE

TAKE HOME AND READ

VOLUME I, ISSUE 2

Ana Romero

A story of systems, not a woman

By Beth Connors-Manke

I'm not sure I know who Ana Romero Rivera is, not really. Over the last ten months or so I've read her in the *Herald-Leader*, in *La Voz*, and even in the *New York Times*. She is singular and representative. Her name has appeared on some lists (deportation lists) and been left off others (death lists).

I wanted to know more about Romero after Nina Bernstein of the *New York Times* reported on April 3, 2009 that Romero's name was absent from an Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) list of people who had died while in the agency's custody. In the *Times* article, Romero is but one example of immigrants who have died quietly in the bellows of our prison and detention systems. After mentioning Romero, Bernstein writes, "There are unverified reports that other detainees may have died unnamed and uncounted."

Unnamed and uncounted. Doesn't the idea of dying unnamed and uncounted dredge up some primal fear of dying and being erased completely from existence, from memory, from the tribe? It's the existential version of the question, "If a tree falls in the forest and no one is around to hear it, does it make a sound?" If you die an immigrant in a detention center while awaiting deportation, will anyone know or care?

While Romero may remain uncounted on the ICE list, she is not unnamed. Here are the basics of her travails made available last August in the *Herald-Leader*: A 44 year-old cleaning woman from El Salvador, Romero was arrested on Jan. 14, 2008. Police had come knocking on her door, looking for someone else, and took her into custody. More than seven months and several jails later, she pleaded guilty on Aug. 7, 2008, to using fake identification documents and was ready to be deported. She would return to her mother in El Salvador. On Aug. 21 she hanged herself in her jail cell in Frankfort.

That's a story with a lot of gaps. Reading through the archived news stories, a few more details add to the picture. The autopsy report states that Romero had abrasions on her hands, but the coroner does not know what caused them. She had been placed in isolation before her death because she had not been eating. Romero had also complained of feeling sick and vomiting. On the day preceding her death, jail staff checked on her at a number of intervals. On Aug. 20, Romero talked

to a therapist with an interpreter for more than an hour. She did not want to commit suicide, Romero assured the therapist, she just wanted to go home. The autopsy found an anti-depressant named amitriptyline in her system.

Romero was pronounced dead on the same day that she was slated to be taken into ICE custody and deported. Freddy Peralta, president of the Kentucky Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (KCIRR), told the *Herald-Leader*, "She was not supposed to be in jail when she died." Federal law mandates that Romero should have been picked up for deportation within 48 hours (or longer if that period includes a weekend) or released.

There are pieces of a story here, but they don't fit neatly together.

We don't know Ana Romero.

Three years ago, Romero had traversed the many miles between El Salvador and Kentucky. Tropical and mountainous, El Salvador is the smallest Central American country with a population of about 7 million people. A brutal civil war extended through the 1980s, claiming 75,000 lives in the country. Romero's early adulthood would have been spent in this era of bloodshed.

Eventually, Romero came to U.S., landed in Kentucky, and began cleaning houses. These facts are barebones; I want to know more about her story. Why did she come? What did it cost her to leave her home country, to leave her mother, to pass into the U.S. and then have to rely on false documents to stay here? This is the gap in the story that bothers me. Official reports show that after months in jail, Romero was brought to such anguish that she committed suicide the day after she supposedly told a therapist she didn't want to kill herself, that she just wanted to return to El Salvador.

What's the personal side of this story? What's the human side?

An Account of Systems

The human side of the story keeps calling to me because it's so conspicuously absent from the official accounts. If you follow the narrative thread through the *Herald-Leader* news stories, mostly you learn of various officials who stress that they followed all the rules of their particular system:

"Though Romero was in the Franklin County jail, she was technically in federal custody." *Herald-Leader*, Oct. 4, 2008

"[Supervisory deputy for the U.S. Marshals Tom] Clay said he doesn't know why ICE agents waited until Aug. 22 to pick up Romero. He said



An undated photo of Ana Romero Rivera, who died awaiting deportation in the Franklin County Jail. Photo courtesy the Kentucky Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights.

his office moved on to other prisoners and other cases after sending the e-mail notification and considered Romero to be out of their purview." *Herald-Leader*, Nov. 20, 2008

"ICE spokeswoman Gail Montenegro said agents make every effort to take into custody a person held on a detainer within 48 hours but did not offer any reason why it took much longer to pick up Romero. The agency's position is that Romero was not in ICE custody when she died, therefore the agency can't comment

on her death." *Herald-Leader*, Nov. 20, 2008

"How far do we have to carry out this notification process? We did what we were supposed to do. I can't answer why [ICE] didn't do their job," [Supervisory deputy Clay] said. "It was obviously a mistake and unfortunately it had a bad end." *Herald-Leader*, Nov. 20, 2008

"As a result of Romero's death, [Commonwealth's Attorney Larry]

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Kentucky Theatre Summer Classic Film Series is back in full swing

By Colleen Glenn

"You know, I used to live like Robinson Crusoe. I mean, shipwrecked among 8 million people. And then one day I saw a footprint in the sand, and there you were." A sigh of emotion murmured through the audience as we watched the endearing C.C. Baxter (Jack Lemon) humbly declare his love to Fran Kubelick (Shirley MacLaine) in *The Apartment* (1960). If you missed the movie last week at the Kentucky Theatre, you not only missed the debut of its beloved Summer Classic Film Series, you also missed a chance to see—on the big screen—one of the top romantic comedies ever made. Renting the DVD and watching at home just isn't the same experience.

Billy Wilder's 1960 film is about two kind and lonely souls in a big city who, after various mishaps, end up happily together. Sounds cliché, right? In another person's hands, it might have been. But with the brilliant direction and writing by Wilder, one of the great auteurs of the Hollywood Studio era, and superb performances by Lemmon and MacLaine, *The Apartment* is anything but trite. Though hilarious situations abound as Baxter attempts to use the corporate sex ladder (he's not the one seeing any action; his apartment is) to gain a promotion, the film ultimately contains too much true-to-life heartache and sorrow for it to be subscribed only to the romantic comedy genre.

In a particularly poignant moment, Baxter recognizes Fran's damaged compact as the one he found in his apartment after one of his supervisor's late-night romps: "The mirror... it's broken," he says, slowly realizing that the woman he adores is in love with his boss, who happens to be a real jerk. Fran shrugs, "Yes, I know. I like it that way. Makes me look the way I feel." Only MacClaine could deliver that line with such straightforwardness and simplicity and move audiences to tears.

Yes, I admit, I cried. Good movies will do that to me.

The Kentucky Has Always Been Classic

But don't fret if you missed *The Apartment*. Many more terrific classic movies are scheduled every Wednesday at the Kentucky Theatre this summer. Fourteen to be exact. And all are worth viewing. Every year, the theatre manages to get their hands on classic films that audiences enjoy seeing on the big screen again, or for some patrons, for the first time.

Even before the Summer Classic Film Series began in 2003, the Kentucky had often screened classic movies. "We used to be a repertory house or revival house or a calendar house, you could call it," General Manager Fred Mills explains, pointing to a calendar on the wall printed by the theatre that lists films in each date.

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The Kentucky Theatre marquee. Photo: Colleen Glenn.

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The Neighborhood

North of Center is a periodical, a place, and a perspective. Keep reading to find out what that means.

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More misadventures... ...on someone else's land

By Beth Connors-Manke

So on Saturday mornings, I suit up and head to the London Ferrell Community Garden. The suiting up entails putting on a ten-year-old pair of pants and a tie-dyed t-shirt from my high school. The outfit is dingy and generally stained. Then I find some shoes fit for gardening and the two-mile walk to the garden.

My Saturday morning walk-about takes me through some very different sections of the city. I meander through one of the prettiest and priciest neighborhoods inside New Circle. I ramble past a stretch of homegrown, locally owned businesses. My feet slap the pavement of the east end of downtown. I continue north along thoroughfares where skinny white girl is a minority. I arrive at the garden.

I know people who want to feel warm and fuzzy about gardening. They want to sense some connection to the pastoral life. Great: any reason is as good as the next when it comes to paying close attention to how your food is grown and where it comes from.

I like going to garden because, to me, it's about being in the city.

These are the urban things that I have seen on my walk: little black girls roller skating along Elm Tree; homeless, or relatively homeless, guys loitering outside Lighthouse Mission;

families in khaki and blue, no doubt shuffling to some UK event downtown; a house decked out in pink and skull art; a large, beautiful, old home, well taken care of and coated in yellow.

Going to the garden is about getting to know my city as much as it is about getting some really delicious greens to eat in May. But padding through the city isn't an idyllic journey for me any more than gardening is romantic and rural. I'm not at ease with everything I walk by. I usually choose to walk on the opposite side of the street from the mission because standing groups of men can be unsettling for a lone woman. The yellow house, as glorious as it is, is gratuitously expensive. That downtown regularly becomes a pilgrimage site for UK athletics fans irritates me on my crankier days.

I think it's ok to feel a little uneasy as I walk to the garden. If someone approaches me on the sidewalk, or yells at me from a car, or throws an old baby doll head at me, I'll have to deal with it and move on. Or, the opposite could happen, and has happened: I may meet someone, and he or she smiles, nods, or gives a friendly grunt.

Saturday #3: 16 May 2009

Today was the beginning of the steamy Saturday morning heat. Last

year, some Saturdays at the garden felt positively dogged with the sunshine hitting all the concrete downtown. I opted for shorts rather than my long raggedy pants. When I got to the garden, I met Miss Roberta, decked out in classic grey sweatpants and a sweatshirt with ARMY across the chest. I sized up Miss Roberta's outfit quickly, judging her to be overdressed. It only took me one knee down in the dirt to remember why limbs should be well-covered at the garden. No, not dirt. Glass. The garden has been several things over time, including a house. There are artifacts of domestic living all over the plot. An assortment of glass shards shimmies up to ground-level whenever the soil is turned over. Bad idea to kneel bare-legged in glass.

Already having taught me a cardinal rule about urban gardening—wear the right clothes, girl—Miss Roberta imparted two other bits of knowledge. First, a recipe for parsnips—use butter—and second, talk to the plants. After we had planted okra, tomatoes, bell peppers, and pattypan squash, Miss Roberta blessed all the plants. “You gotta talk to them to get them to grow for you.” No doubt, Miss Roberta, no doubt.

This is part 2 of a continuing series. Look for more of Beth's updates from the London Ferrell Community Garden in future issues.

Building a basil economy

By Danny Mayer

This is the first part of a two-part series.

Last summer I was awash in basil. Mostly genovese, but also a sweet, a cinnamon, a purple, and a strikingly pungent lemon variety.

My basil crops were the result of a frantic burst of what might best be described as a month of youthful teenage exuberance germinating over a dozen years late. I spread my basil seed everywhere. I scattered it in a tiered garden tucked in the back corner of the Trinity Baptist Church parking lot (our former home) and in a handscabble spot hastily dug on an empty lot off MLK (our current home). I spread my seed in a hops garden, a lettuce garden, and a poorly tended garden in nearby Keene, KY, and I laid it down in a private double plot in the even more proximate London Ferrill Garden. I even spread some seeds in a couple of guerrilla garden beds around town.

My basil sprouted around squash, above watermelon vines, and between tomato plants. Some of it shaded late-season lettuce. One particular plant I recall growing to a size of three feet and looking like a great, sticky pot plant. I imagined myself re-scenting the greater Lexington area, and in some spots, after a particularly unexpected breeze or a casual hand bent and teased the fields of leaves, I swear that scent took hold. I was a regular Johnny Basil-seed.

By late June, I had a curious and not wholly unexpected dilemma: how might I utilize or otherwise dispose of all that scent and flavor?

I say not wholly unexpected because the year before I had a similar need to get rid of basil—though not nearly so much—when I guerrilla gardened some roma tomatoes and basil at the top lip of a drainage ditch behind a stripmall on Winchester Road. I wound up bringing my excess basil to Enza's, now unfortunately closed but at the time only a short walk down Winchester from my guerrilla garden plot. Though I intended the basil as a gift born of seasonal excess, on occasion I ended up receiving balls of homemade mozzarella in exchange. It was an eye-opening process for me: come with basil, give it to Curtis to use in sandwiches, eat a caprese sandwich

for lunch with my just-picked basil shredded on top, pay for the meal, and leave with an extra two or three or four balls of fresh mozzarella floating in a container of mozzarella water.

So when the great basil crunch hit me last summer, I was partially prepared. I began to harvest different plots weekly and give my excess green freely away to interested restaurants that I often found myself eating at. And in return, I received from these restaurants more mozzarella balls, the occasional free meal, gift certificates to distribute to friends and dogsitters, and much good will. Not bad for about an \$8 investment in seeds.

Growing a Different Economy

Much has been made, in print and on air, of Lexingtonians' budding interest in growing and consuming fresh and local produce. We eat fresher food. We get to sample a greater variety of food. We grow community by gathering in groups at places like Farmer's Markets to chat, eat, and purchase food for home. We nourish and reconnect to the earth. We support local farmers. We get outside and away from the television and the computer.

These are all true, all beneficial, all certainly needed in spades around Lexington and the rest of the U.S. But I suspect there's something else going on here. By beginning to grow our own food, we may once again begin to think of ourselves as producers who have something of value to offer our friends, our neighbors, and, yes, even our local businesses.

Significantly, this value has little direct connection to the dollar bill. Whether it be basil and tomatoes, cucumbers, marijuana, beer and wine, honey, or a host of other things, the increased interest in growing and producing things for ourselves has the potential to offer workable alternatives for the current dollar-based economy that, to put it frankly, is fucking up most of our lives.

Don't get me wrong. We often hear statements about the economic value of growing our own food, usually appended with the tagline, “especially in these troubled economic times.” My sense is that mostly we understand that to mean, “Grow your own food and save money so you can purchase other things.” If those things include



housing and clothing, that's great and I hope you have begun growing your veggies.

But what I mean by the economics of growing your own food has more to do with long-term structural changes that see us buy less and pay more for the things we consume. The saying, “Money doesn't grow on trees” is a pretty tired and obvious cliché, but from a different perspective it's also a lament that begins to shed light on our need for less dependence on a money economy and more dependence on a growing economy. *Of course* that's something to continually pound into the mind of a young child. In their eyes, that our most precious resource *doesn't* come from trees or some other widely available resource must sound pretty counter-intuitive. (And they're right.)

I often ask students in my freshman English classes at Bluegrass Community and Technical College why they have returned to college. Although a few enterprising souls and straight-up kiss asses offer up their interest in learning about the world they inhabit, most students in my classes cite one reason: to get a job and make money. I don't begrudge them for this, especially because most of us have been telling them to shell out increasing sums of money to attend college so that they can make a decent wage.

At the same time, their response—indeed for most of them their very presence at college to begin with—is a symptom of what's wrong with our moneyed economy. In a place where all transactions must have a dollar value, you have no value without money. And so we work to make money, which

we can't eat, can't smoke, can't drink, can't sleep under, and can't wear.

Gleaning Networks and Free Stores: Giving Away Abundance

In a nation that has its own hunger problems, growing your own food ensures you will know abundance. Or as John Walker put it during our chat over tea at his Hamilton Park home, “I can guarantee that you will at some time have more than you know what do with.”

Walker, a native of England, has been gardening in the same Lexington backyard for fifteen years, so he knows something about abundance. Along with his work teaching people how to prepare home-grown and home-cooked food at Kitchen Gardeners Bluegrass, Walker has organized a loosely affiliated group of gleaners, the Lexington Urban Gleaning Network (LUGN), who this summer and fall will collect that agricultural abundance before it rots away. LUGN's goal is to identify unused fruit trees and overwhelmed backyard gardeners in order to gather, or glean, unused food. From the gleaner's hands, the food will pass through a number of food banks large and small for distribution to those needing food.

LUGN offers a glimpse at one way that the agricultural tendency of abundance alters our economic assumptions. In a “free” market dominated by dollars and yen and other currencies, the catchword is often scarcity. Do I have enough money? How can I make more? Why would I give you my hard earned dollars? Walker's gleaning initiative, however, assumes that what's needed—what's valuable in any economy—is not ultimately money but food, shelter, clothing, security. It's not about accumulating dollars as a marker of wealth, but rather distributing different forms of wealth and currency: tomatoes, Kentucky half-runner beans, figs, pears.

I have been dealing with this sense of abundance as well. Last year, basil was not the only type of seed I scattered about. By early July, I found myself with too much of just about everything, so I began holding a free store in the parking lot of Al's Bar. (Thanks Josh.) Mirroring Walker's interest in gleaning, the Lexington Free Store aimed to show that food is a right and

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Ana Romero (cont.)

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Cleveland said ... he is recommending that the jail increase and improve communication with immigration officials so those awaiting deportation are picked up in a timely manner." *Herald-Leader*, Dec. 11, 2008

"Officials from Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the U.S. Marshal's office disagree on who had federal oversight of Romero's case when she died." *Herald-Leader*, Dec. 11, 2008

Where's Ana Romero in all this?

With so little information about the woman herself, we'll have to imagine her for a moment. She's in a country foreign to her, one with a different language, a substantial bias against Hispanic immigrants, and, at times, rage against any immigrant without legal documents. She cleans houses in one of the poorer states in the union, in one of the poor parts of that state. She has family here; she has family in her country of origin. At any moment, despite a humble job and a low profile, she could be swept into an almost impregnable legal and carceral system that would do with her as it wills. The worst happens: she is sucked into that system and forgotten—or feels forgotten as governmental agencies follow protocol, botch protocol, and leave her stranded—even though her limbo status violates their own rules.

Imagine what it feels like to be in jail in a foreign country. Would you feel desperation? Would desperation be an understandable, if not appropriate reaction? Would it be a normal human reaction?

Yes, it would.

Here's the catch: are undocumented immigrants human? If a woman like Ana Romero has no legal sanction for being in the U.S., does that mean that we should not accord her—or the others like her who have died in immigrant detention centers, county jails, and privatized prisons—basic human dignity and rights? Rather, should they simply be treated as units moved in a system whose purpose is to eliminate them from within our borders?

I wish the question of immigrants' humanity were simply an overdramatic ploy on my part. Unfortunately, the rhetoric of some right wing radio and border-protecting militia suggests that Latino immigrants are less than human. Let's agree that these voices are loud and outrageous, but still a minority in the U.S.—that they are not representative. But what about the system in which Romero and others like her are imprisoned: does it treat them as individuals with families, fears, and harsh conditions forcing them far from home?

Imprisoning Immigrants

Of the detention of immigrants without legal documentation, Brian

Rich, board member of KCIRR and Professor of Sociology at Transylvania University, states, "The thing with the case of Ana Romero is that it's just one of many cases that go on. There's a lot of really serious cases. The really serious transgressions of humane treatment of prisoners or immigrants in detention centers is just under the radar. It's not reported in the media."

Rich has worked on the Justice for Ana Romero/Stop the Raids and Deportations Campaign, which helped push for more investigation into Romero's death. Rich has also supported Romero's family in their grief and continued legal proceedings regarding her death.

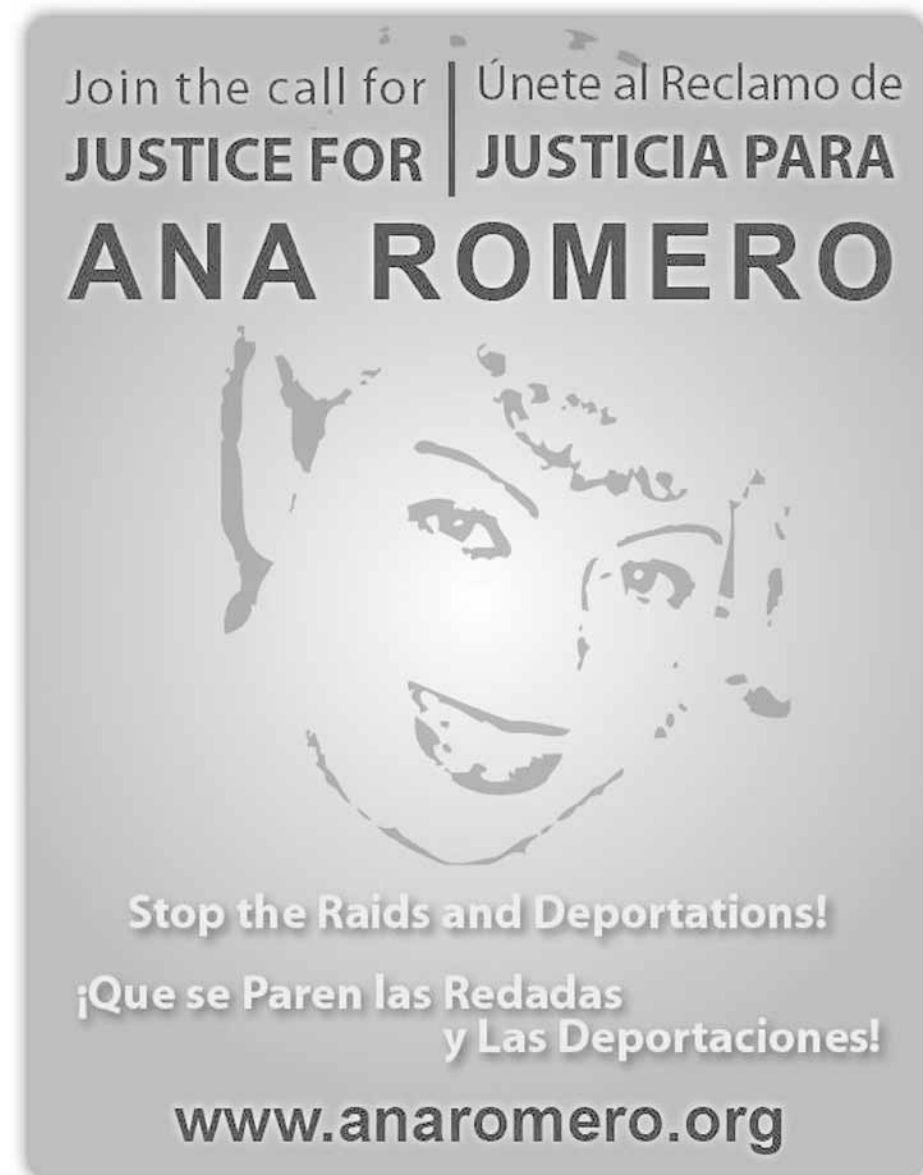
"There was this attitude that here's this immigrant, she committed suicide in jail and maybe that's sad or whatever, but everything worked the way it was supposed to work, and there's no real reason we need to look into this. I felt that the campaign we mounted was successful. We went to see [Commonwealth's Attorney] Larry Cleveland in Frankfort, and we presented a stack of petitions that we'd circulated—we'd gotten over 1,500 people and dozens if not hundreds of organizations around the country, around the world. You have to put pressure on people and say, 'This person matters, this case matters. We need to know what went wrong.'"

Linking Romero's imprisonment to the larger system, Rich sees an economic imperative involved in the continued enforcement approach to immigration.

"The privatization of jails and prisons around the country is a really mushrooming industry. It coincides with the increased crackdown, raids, and deportations involved with the immigrant system, which many of us consider to be completely broken, dysfunctional. So there's a profit motive. The imprisonment and detention of immigrants for immigration related offenses under the current law has been aided and abetted by this privatization movement. We have to see the privatization movement as part of an unhinging of incarceration and detention from the federal system so that the oversight, the regulation, the control, how those private jails and prisons work is even less well known by the authorities themselves."

An April 30, 2009 editorial in the *Herald-Leader* reports that "the immigrant detention system has grown by fivefold since 1994, with especially explosive growth in the last five years. The expansion was supposed to sweep up terrorists and criminals and ensure quick deportation of undocumented immigrants."

Rich now has more reason to question the treatment of immigrants incarcerated in privatized or publicly funded jails. As reported by *La Voz* on April 26, 2009, Mexican immigrant Rigoberto Jacome/Emanuel Reyes died



from a beating he allegedly received from another inmate on April 20 at the Grayson County Detention Center near Leitchfield, KY. In question is the detention center staff's decision to take Reyes to the hospital in the back of a deputy's car rather than calling for a helicopter or ambulance with medical personnel to transport Reyes, whose injuries were severe enough to call for brain surgery.

The imprisonment of workers for immigration related offenses does the work of criminalizing a population that, by and large, isn't committing crimes, if we understand a crime to be an offense against the community. In Rich's estimation, "We have millions of people in this country without papers because the law is bad, not because they're bad." As Rich pointed out at a recent community talk at Al's Bar, "being 'illegal' is a life threatening situation"—so precarious are the circumstances of immigrants without legal papers that it makes little sense for them to invite conflict with law enforcement authorities.

Criminalizing a group of people, as has been done with other minorities in the U.S., allows us to institute systems that are, at root, dehumanizing.

The Consequences of NAFTA

Rich's arguments about the immigration system imply that our current strategy of criminalizing and incarcerating undocumented immigrants is a result of broader U.S. economic and political policies. While ICE officials and U.S. Marshals argued over whose system Romero was actually a part of at the time of her death, Rich and others indict an even larger system: NAFTA.

In a Dec. 14, 2008 editorial to the *Herald-Leader*, co-written by Rich, Stephen Bartlett, and Attica Scott, they argue that "The North American Free Trade Agreement, and more recently the Central American Free Trade Agreement, are both part of a system of market domination harming working people to the south of our border."

The assertion is backed up by Rich's personal observations of Mexico. "I was in Mexico in March. The rural countryside in Mexico is getting hammered by NAFTA. I was in communities where all you see are women and children and a few old folks, and they're all living off remittances from the United States. In one village the local paper said remittances were down 90% in the last three months. We're all becoming more and more integrated through this economic process, except the one important factor of production, which is labor, is not allowed to migrate."

"We have to find a way to regularize and control, to bring above ground what has become a very illegal underground black market of people, in human trafficking, in drugs, in guns," said Rich. "We've helped create

a black market—government policies have actively helped create that."

Rich outlines the big picture of how one system bankrupts other structures and situations: "The immigrant system is dysfunctional and those dysfunctions are having this spill over effect on all these other areas, on the jail system, to the rule of law, to the drug situation here, to the political system. People who believe in the rule of law need to take a really good look at what the law consists of and how it actually works and stop using the rule of law as a mantra to say 'We have to crack down on people who are breaking the law.'"

Coda: Still Invisible in Death?

I decided to write this article to get a better sense of Ana Romero's suffering, why she took her life instead of enduring a few more days (or weeks, or months—had she been told when ICE agents would come to get her?). In collecting and paging through a stack of articles, I never found her story. Rich told me a bit about her family and their grief, but that's not Romero's own story. Instead, my research yielded an account of systems and how individuals and groups become lost, even sacrificed, to those structures. Is Romero's life a cautionary tale? A tragedy? A representative example? Is it mundane? Dramatic?

As our conversation wrapped up, Rich said, "I'm hoping that someday, however long it takes, justice will be done, and we'll have a reason to celebrate Ana's death."

Struggling to imagine what could really redeem a tragic death like Romero's, I pressed Rich to tell me what kind of what justice that will be, what will come out of Romero's death.

"First and foremost, justice for the family—that what happened to Ana will be fully brought to light and that the parties responsible for her death will be held accountable as much as that's possible." Rich went on to say that he hoped that Romero's death could be used to spotlight the inhumane aspects of the immigration system.

I don't know what else one could ask for—the vindication Rich describes seems necessary and right. But, is it enough? In the final moments, whatever the intimate root of Romero's despair, she was lost in the criss-crossed rules of agencies all trying to get rid of her. Justice may come for her family, but it never came to Romero herself. I wonder if her story still eludes us. Who is publicly really telling *her* story? As an individual, Romero seems as invisible now as she was while working as a cleaning woman in Shelby County, quietly trying to evade deportation.

Notes:

Facts on El Salvador: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/es.html>

Building the basil economy (cont.)

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not a commodity to be withheld from those who can't afford it. Our motto: "It's even better than a steal!"

I recall the trepidation with which passersby and "customers" initially approached my beaten down Nissan pickup truck. "You're just giving this away?" they'd ask incredulously. "Sure, why not," I'd reply casually. "Otherwise it's in my compost."

No doubt the measured first inquiries had much to do with me—a white boy—giving away the food, but I think something else was also at play. There's a certain psychic barrier or socialized hurdle that we must all leap over or dig under before something like the Lexington Free Store makes sense. In that it emphasizes giving over buying, the distribution of excess rather than the selling of surplus, the store seemingly defies all rules for being a store. But as a store sharer (as opposed to store owner), I can sustain myself for the very reason that the store depends on something that I can replenish for very little money. In other words, for the most part I can use food to cut money out of my economic transactions.

In return, at the Lexington Free Store I received as much as I gave. We exchanged no money and yet the transactions were fair. I met new faces, learned new recipes for using the produce I was giving away, and at times even had meals cooked for me. Without money, this was a different form of economic efficiency, one that saw both me and my "customers" mutually enriched by our transaction.

When food is your main currency, it becomes difficult to be a good capitalist. We may, after all, accumulate dollars at the bank or under our mattresses to leverage for other necessities like buying a car or future stocks in oil, but it's quite difficult to accumulate fresh produce over the long haul. While the economics of money dictates that money hoarding is a normalized goal, I've yet to see many tomato hoarders, those fuckers, last more than a month or two in their homes before getting rotted out by the stench of their misdeeds. Using produce as our currency, the very concept of wealth accumulation seems more than a little grotesque, unproductive, and above all else, sick.

On the representation of violence in film

By Michael Benton

"Far from being mindless, violence is usually the cutting edge of ideas and ideologies."

— John Fraser, *Violence in the Arts* (1974)

I believe that violence is a necessary part of many narratives because it is a part of reality. Violence is a part of the human experience. How can we ignore it?

At the same time I reject simplistic, cartoonish uses of violence where the hero is shot at a hundred times and perhaps receives a scratch while methodically dispatching every person he faces. I think it is irresponsible to repeatedly portray, or think of, violence as simply mindless entertainment.

It is important that we have intelligent, complex explorations of individual and collective violence. There are outbreaks of violence that when they happen, seem beyond our ken, or present understanding. But sometimes, with time, and through careful sifting of clues, we may be able to grasp the motivations or causes. Likewise, in a work of "art," one can begin to grasp

at the reason for the violence, make sense of a sort, even if one does not agree with the portrayal of the causes or motivations for the violence. I feel the same way about the mindless, commercial simplification of the messy, complicated aspects of sex and sexuality in American culture.

I value intelligent reflections on violence—whether as a means to a desired end, or as a frustrated reaction to events beyond our control, or as a tool for oppression/resistance. Who is using the violence? As a means for what end? Who are the victims? Why are they chosen? What are the goals of this violence?

Ultimately violence in great films will cause you to think about the action beyond the visceral sensations, positive or negative, and will cause you to exercise your own judgment and thought. A complex representation of violence will initiate critical reflection upon the events of the story, and for me this is a defining moment in judging a film or any other work of art.

The benefits of some narrative violence is that it makes it harder for audiences to ignore the motivations

or beliefs of the characters, especially when we become implicated by our own violent impulses. We become so wrapped up in the narrative that we encourage the violence—"Do it, do it!!!" A good narrative can cause us to reflect on this impulse. In a complex cinematic presentation we are faced with an intellectual quandary in regard to the usage of the violence and the rationale for its usage. A powerful film will not allow us to stand silently on the sidelines and retain our intellectual integrity. We have to take a stand, even if it is to condemn the movie. After all, the artist did present us with a work that is intended to shock or affront.

What is often missed in Hollywood films, as well as many foreign films, is that historically violence is usually employed in the service of "power," whether on an individual or systemic level. Our democracy is built on the ignorance of the daily usage of violence to keep discontented people and groups docile about their situation in life. This structural mask sometimes slips, allowing a glimpse of the true face of that systemic power. Thus, a necessary part of violent narratives is

our understanding of the roots of this societal power/control.

People facing the threat of actual acts of violence also help us to understand human potential, but it is not a case of human physicality or big weapons. In the cinematic narratives I am speaking of, it is the plumbing of the human soul and the questioning of the mind/system through a person's perspective and/or a system's attempt at control.

Can violence in cinema help us to examine these broader operations of power in society?

Pier Paolo Pasolini's brutal, disgusting and difficult *Salò, or the 120 Days of Sodom* (Italy/France, 1975) traumatically, for this viewer, explores the victim's complicity as well as the oppressor's degradations in a fascist society. It is a truly painful and wrenching film, but I do not regret having watched it. The ending of Peter Greenaway's aesthetically beautiful *The Baby of Macon* (UK/France/Germany/Belgium/Netherlands, 1993) disturbed me more than any sophomoric horror

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Review: *The Visitor*

By A.G. Greebbs

"In a world of Six Billion People, it only takes one to accidentally screw up your life."

The Visitor, Thomas McCarthy's follow up to his crazy popular, independent hit *The Station Agent* is a quiet, introspective look at the chasm of experience between American citizens, and the illegal immigrants they live and work beside. It was released in 2008 and is now available on DVD.

Walter Vale (Richard Jenkins) is an aging, painfully self-contained economics professor. He grinds through his days of unenthusiastic teaching with few interests outside the classical music his late wife used to play. Walter is hesitant, the sort of man who is always changing his mind and running out the door (a device *The Visitor* employs a tad too frequently). Bullied into presenting a paper at a conference, he makes a rare visit to his New York flat and finds two people already living there.

Tarek (Haaz Sleiman), and Zainab (Danai Gurira) are victims of a con-artist who's rented them Walter's

apartment. Zainab is a Senegalese jeweler whose suspicions of Walter are initially so strong it gives her an awkwardness that almost matches his own. Her boyfriend, Tarek, is more open, charming Walter with drum lessons and easy offers of friendship. But a small misstep on the subway lands Tarek in a detention center facing deportation, and the others to struggle with the capricious and opaque bureaucracy of immigration control.

The acting is virtuoso. Jenkins was nominated for an Academy Award (Category: part most likely to be played by William Hurt). He's well matched with Sleiman, whose appearance of genuine friendliness makes him one of the few people from film you might actually want crashing on your couch. It's impossible to overstate the extent to which *The Visitor's* success relies on its intensely likable cast.

But what the film has in acting, it lacks in originality. McCarthy is past master of the quiet, introspective moment. But being slow and introspective really only works if you have some intellectual meat on your bones, and *The Visitor* is pretty slim. It relies

mostly on archetypes, if not outright clichés.

The bigger problem is that, for a movie contemplating illegal-immigrant life in America, it didn't seem to have a great deal of insight into how that life was different from an average citizen's—up to the moment you're put in detention, of course. Even the small jokes about our country's culture of naïveté seem home grown, being very much the sort that Americans make about other Americans.

This leads to some pretty awkward film making. What works fine for Walter's story— all those indy-movie idioms used to portray "lonely old man finding himself" (long silences, domestic details, natural lighting, etc.)—don't serve his costars nearly as well. In the beginning it's fine, since Walter's shyness is a counterpoint to the reticence of his new roommates. But as the story progresses and relationships deepen, the immigrants are awkwardly shoe-horned into the navel-gazing aesthetic.

The Visitor is one of those movies that is described using words like "poignant" and "bittersweet," and while both those words apply, they apply

only to the extent that McCarthy's long, slow shots and drawn-out silences force them to. The actual substance of the plot, the privately run detention centers and the secretive bureaucratic process that ends in late night flights to Syrian detention centers, is dark enough to be at odds with the bright shots of people sipping wine next to windows.

That's troublesome, because for Tarek, this isn't ultimately a journey towards self awareness. The danger he's in is substantially more acute than that of living an unrealized life. And since the film only addresses those dangers in an oblique way, Walter's friends become more and more the tools of his journey to self-actualization, and the film is ultimately less of an ensemble piece than McCarthy probably intended.

Walter might come to a fuller realization of himself and his life, and that realization may be a poignant one. But for Tarek and his family, facing deportation doesn't only carry the loss of a home, loved ones and career

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Kentucky Theatre (cont.)

continued from page 1

"Everybody in Lexington would have those calendars on their pantry door or their dorm room or their refrigerator. It showed you everything we were doing here for six weeks at a time. We did it for 20 years."

"On that calendar were some old movies, first run movies, good second run movies, some off-beat things, and cult movies at midnight," Mills recollects. "Well, things change. The film industry changes." As popular as the calendar was, it locked the theatre into commitments to screen films that were not always profitable. As Mills explains, "We would have that calendar at the printer's. And we would be finding out that on that schedule on the very first week there's a movie that's playing New York and LA and it's bombing. And we're going to have to bring it here and we know we're going to be doing zero business."

The Kentucky was also facing an increase in competition as more theatres came to Lexington. Discount theatres, too, prompted the Kentucky's decision to change their format: "The first run theatres began to show movies for a longer period of time," says Mills, explaining the effect the dollar-house theatres had on the business. "Therefore we couldn't get them onto our calendar for second run as a mix

with all the first run movies and the foreign films and everything else. So we elected to not do the calendar anymore. We needed more flexibility."

In the late '90s, the Kentucky changed their format to the one that is familiar to us now. They decided to use their two screens to be a first-run theatre and to lean toward arty and independent movies, as much as possible.

Mills, who has worked at the theatre since 1963, reflects on the Kentucky's inclusiveness: "We really strive to make it everybody's theatre. We do movies, we do concerts, we have local bands, we have comedians, lecturers; you name it, we've probably done it." And there's stuff to see on your way from the concession stand to the theatre, too. "We have a nice space that's an art gallery. People come here and they don't expect to see artwork...It's a space that really gets utilized."

A Space Worth Saving

The Kentucky Theatre opened in 1922 and operated continuously until 1987 when a fire destroyed much of the building. The current owners at the time elected not to open it, so the theatre stayed closed for about three years. Recounting the history of the theatre, Mills relates that the local government stepped in and bought the property and renovated the theatre. "That was really something that the Lexington-Fayette



Theatre-goers await the return of the Mighty Wurlitzer, but enjoy this organ all the same.

Urban County Government did right when they saved the building," Mills says appreciatively. The local government owns the property to this day, and the Kentucky Theatre leases the building from them. "We are not subsidized," Mills adds, pointing to the need to draw in new and regular patrons to keep their doors open.

Kicking Off the Classic Film Series

Much of the success of the Kentucky Theatre for the last several years may be attributed to Larry Thomas. Thomas used to own a repertory movie house on Race Street in Cincinnati and now books the films to be screened at the Kentucky. "He's got the pulse on everything that's happening in this country," Mills says affectionately. "Very rarely could you ask him about a film that he doesn't know about. He knows me, he knows

the Kentucky Theatre, he knows the patrons, he knows Lexington, he knows our mission here."

"It was Larry Thomas's idea," says Mills, remembering the discussions that led to the creation of the Summer Classic Film Series. Mills recalls that Thomas asked, "What do you think about [a classic film series], and we said, well, hey it's worth a try."

It certainly has been worth the effort. Each Wednesday evening, between 600 and 700 people attend the summer series. Some nights, they sell out, filling their 800-seat theatre to capacity.

Summer of 2009 Features New Prints and Crowd Favorites

The summer of 2009 line-up is, in a word, impressive. The Classic Film

continued on the next page

Culture

Live music you need to know about

NoC's music staff breaks down the next two weeks

Friday, June 5

Wolf Eyes w/ Sick Hour, Walter Carson, Street Gnar/Trance Substantiation
The Void, 8 P.M. \$5. All ages.

Wolf Eyes are the aural equivalent of *River's Edge*: leather and denim, heavy metal, death fixation, drug paranoia and teenage apathy, skulls, spray-paint, cheap beer, long nights indistinguishable from dim, hazy days—but transplanted to the more viscerally depressed greater Detroit area, a savage scream wrenched from decaying and possessed machinery, fucked forever, *Always Wrong*. They've now abandoned the sturdy rhythmic language of industrial music in favor of a disorienting clatter and murmur to bear their psychic miasma, a sound as hateful and vicious and extreme and unpredictable and unforgiving as an Ohio Valley winter. Their newest recruit, Mike Connelly, cut his teeth on noise in Lexington (at WRFL, actually), so allow him to return the favor.

Saturday, June 6

Spooky Qs' Record Release Party
The Void

When I first saw the Spooky Qs live, I'll admit to being initially confused. They incorporated No Wave drumming, Flamenco-style guitar, droning violin à la John Cale, prickly arpeggios issuing from a Game Boy, and a chorus of clear, earnest voices in simple harmony, hearkening back to 80s college rock. In the hands of anyone else, such a mélange would result in disaster, but the Qs are just doing what comes naturally to them. Their MySpace page confesses to a bevy of disparate influences, from Joy Division to Frank Zappa to PJ Harvey. And so it works, it totally works, and it is as infectious as hell. Grab their new disc before this crazy stuff goes triple-plat, and you never see these guys around town anymore.

Wednesday, June 10

Awesome Color
The Void, 9 P.M. All ages.

Detroit gets the Rock City title not so much because of Kiss, or even really Alice Cooper, but for its legacy of raw, innovative, primal underground jams: Stooges, Funkadelic, MC5, SRC, Negative Approach, Laughing Hyenas, et al. Awesome Color have not simply contributed to this storied history, they have distilled it to its fucking *essence*, relocating to Brooklyn to upstage every lame throwback act there with their gnarly breed of Truth. With the heaviest rhythm section in the business and some of the sickest shred achievable without a skateboard, these kids have won opening slots for Dinosaur Jr. and Sonic Youth, and are gonna come play next to a mini half-pipe in your town. Pizza?

Friday, June 12

Wretched Worst, Flower Man, TBA
CPR, 7 P.M. All ages.

I don't know if there's a band in town I love more than the Wretched Worst. They are the sound of *terminally fucked*. There is a single high-heel shoe balanced on their decrepit drum set. I guess they're a punk band. It's hard to tell. All the elements are there, but something else is happening. The guitar sounds like it's strung with snot rockets. The drums sound like they were stuffed in a locker. The vocals are emanating from a malfunctioning Pinbot machine. The bass nearly holds it all together, but "anchor" would be severe hyperbole. Go on, try to have a good time. Flower Man will open the show with some lo-fi synth confusion.

Saturday, June 13

Bonnie "Prince" Billy w/ Bachelorette
The Red Mile Round Barn, 9 P.M. \$10. All ages.

Judging by the turnout of his last Lexington performance (November 2008), Bonnie "Prince" Billy needs little introduction. But, for those who aren't familiar with artist, photographer, actor, singer-songwriter, and Louisville native Will Oldham, this is your chance to catch one of our state's most distinctive voices and prolific artists in an appropriately Kentuckyesque place: a barn at a horse track. Oldham's Lexington performance marks the finale of a three-month tour for his latest album, *Beware*, which has taken him across America to Europe and back. *Beware* has an alt-country bent that marks a

departure from, say, the serene melancholy of 2006's *The Letting Go* or 2008's lean and warm *Lie Down In The Light*. Oldham's mood swings from song to song, album to album, like seasons shift in the Kentucky countryside. His ever-expanding repertoire makes affixing labels akin to predicting the weather. Relishing the chance to catch up with him, however, makes for an enjoyable alternative.

Opening the show will be New Zealand's own Bachelorette, who has a much more electronic sound than her Drag City labelmate Bonnie "Prince" Billy. Bachelorette's new album, *My Electric Family*, uses heavy bass, space age synthesizers and haunting, repetitive vocals to concoct catchy tunes that meld psychedelic folk with electronic pop.

Saturday, June 13

Mother Father w/ Matt Duncan, Art Tongues
Al's Bar

If the Round Barn hits capacity for the Bonnie "Prince" Billy show before you get in, head on over to Al's Bar and drown your woes in pop music (as well as beer). Mother Father do a sort of upbeat take on the melancholic anthems of Tears for Fears: ethereal synth, steady drumming, and clean, echoey guitar lines. But make sure you don't miss Matt Duncan—for my money, one of Lexington's greatest songwriting talents—ably crafting Motown soul and Stony rockers about post-party depression and suburban ennui grease on the dancefloor. Art Tongues is a new jam from them In Endeavours boys.

Tuesday, June 16

X, Steve Soto and the Twisted Hearts
The Dame, 8 P.M. \$20. 21+.

Though from Los Angeles—their thus-titled record a monument and embodiment of the city—X are more in tune with the *Please Kill Me*, early-NYC tradition of punk: serious chops, serious songwriting, a ballad or two here and there, intelligent and poetic, taking cues from a variety of genres. All the more impressive considering that their birth year, 1980, was late in the punk game, and by then the hardcore scene was determinedly codifying and dogmatizing a world that once contained so much freedom. X, today, still stand for simply that: freedom. And in the spirit of democracy, you can go to their website (www.xtheband.com) and vote on what songs you'd like to see on the setlist.

Tuesday June 16

Nana Grizol, Asstricks*, Little Noodles
Gumbo Ya Ya, 1080 South Broadway, 9 P.M. All ages.

Nana Grizol are yet another talented young high-energy pop group from Athens, GA who have been welcomed into the Elephant 6 fold—many of you might remember them as players in the E6 Holiday Surprise show at the Red Mile Round Barn last autumn. Come early and check out a couple of new locals—ukelele twee-pop from Little Noodles (ex-Laloux) and fun, goofy tunes from Asstricks* (members of Big Fresh).

Contributors: Trevor Tremaine, Nick Kidd, Landon Antonetti



Bonnie "Prince" Billy strikes a pose reminiscent of the classic cover of Frank Zappa's "Bongo Fury." Photo courtesy Nick Kidd.

Kentucky Theatre (cont.)

continued from the previous page

Series schedule is always impressive, but sometimes even faithful fans such as myself can get a little restless during certain films. *Funny Face*, for example, makes one wish Audrey Hepburn had started her humanitarian work a little earlier.

This summer will have you glued to your seat.

Check out some of the upcoming features: *The Birds* (1963); the Marx Brothers' *Duck Soup* (1933) and *Horse Feathers* (1932); *American Graffiti* (1973); *Dr. Strangelove, or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (1964); *Somewhere in Time* (1980); *Once Upon a Time in the West* (1968); and *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* (1961).

When the series first started, they tended to play mainly films from the Golden Age of Hollywood. But as time has gone on, Thomas has begun broadening the schedule to include

more recent films. They've done this for several reasons: for one, the 1970s and 80s is longer ago than we would like to think. Let's face it. *The Godfather* is now 40 years old. (How do you say "Crikey!" in Italian?)

Secondly, new prints have become available for certain films. And that makes them worth screening. "We had a number of '30s and '40s films," Mills says, "and now it's kind of nice to go back and pick some things that are a little more current. You reach out, and maybe you bring in people who don't really care for '40s movies. Maybe you pull these people in because you got some new prints you could get. And you think they're quality prints or you wouldn't be playing them."

Thomas has managed to get his hands on several reprints of film favorites, including *Planet of the Apes* (1968), which actually premiered in Lexington at the Kentucky; *The King and I* (1956),

The Godfather (1972), *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951); *The Hustler* (1961), and *Leave Her to Heaven* (1945), a movie that probably hasn't been in Lexington for 60 years, muses Mills.

"What they've done is, they've gone back, taken this master copy and they've redone it, and when it comes back out they have a new print that's never been run before. So you don't have scratches on it and all that sort of thing," Mills explains.

So, yes, you may have seen *The Godfather*. And *The Hustler*. But you probably haven't seen them quite like this.

"*The King and I*—that's one of my favorites," Mills says. "I remember seeing *Lawrence of Arabia*, and thinking, my gosh, aren't they ever going to get off that desert? It's a great concession stand picture. They're coming out there; they're so thirsty."

These days, classic movie series such as the Kentucky Theatre's summer

program are few and far between. Repertory houses have mainly gone by the wayside. The summer film series is a way for the Kentucky to sustain their inclination toward the celebration of older movies while maintaining contemporary programming to foot the bill.

"We're so lucky," Mills reflects. "We're probably one of the few theatres in the country that really have this type of programming. Which I think is kind of special for a city our size." Playing new releases such as *Star Trek* also helps bring in people who wouldn't normally come to the Kentucky. Then maybe, Mills hopes, they'll keep coming back.

For more information on the Kentucky Theatre, visit www.kentuckytheater.com.

The Kentucky Theatre is located at 214 East Main Street. North of Center thanks Fred Mills for his generosity.

Who are we kidding?

Winning isn't everything...well yes, it is

By Keith Halladay

The following is an edited transcript of an online conversation, conducted over several months, between "Big Blue Dude," a died-in-the-wool UK cage fan, and "The Grouch," whose screen name is self-explanatory, with occasional interjections from other online denizens.

March 4, 2009

The conversation begins during last season's late losing streak.

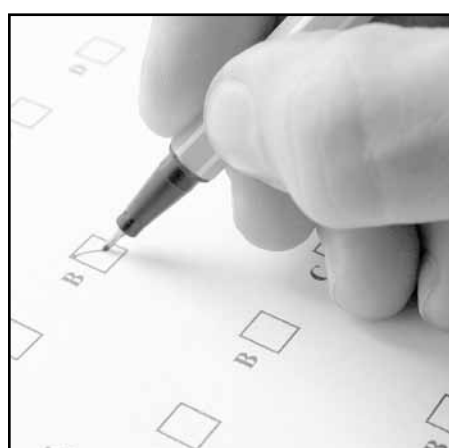
Big Blue Dude: Gillispie's recruiting is on another level. Tubby is a better bench coach, but he was too shortsighted to see what was going on in the recruiting world (and how that would affect the program as the SEC got stronger). I'm willing to give Gillispie 4 or 5 years, just so he'll have all his players here to compliment his system. In a year or two we should be back to those 3-5 loss seasons like we had in the 90's.

The Grouch: Fact is, Tubby got fucked, and Gillispie is driving the program into the ground. I find that funny.

BBD: You're a Tubby apologist. You thought the program was in good hands the last two years he was here? We were finding new ways to lose games!

TG: As opposed to all the amazing, never-should-have-happened victories this year's team has pulled off? Didn't see any of those. Instead I saw losses to teams that a Tubby-coached squad would have blown out of the building—to teams that range from not really that good to barely even D-I caliber.

BBD: Well, guess what: Tubby lost again today, at home, in a "must-win" situation. At Minnesota. I certainly don't hate Tubby, but a change was necessary here at UK.



March 27, 2009

Billy Gillispie is fired from the head coaching position at UK.

TG: Nope. You ride for Gillispie. You think he's a good coach. You don't get to say a damned thing. I am right; you are wrong.

BBD: Oh what the fuck ever, little guy. Like I said a million times before, I support the UK basketball team no matter who the fucking coach is. Whether it was Tubby, Billy Clyde, or now (apparently) Billy Donovan. I want them to win every game and that's that.

March 27, 2009

Rumors suggest John Calipari is to be offered the head coaching position.

TG: Horrible if true. Just fucking horrible. The win-at-all-costs mentality was what led to the hiring of the previous coach. Barnhart should resign ASAP if they're actually extending an offer to Calipari.

Bombs Away: I don't see who Kentucky can realistically get right now that will bring them more success than Calipari.

TG: It depends on one's definition of "success. I'm talking about taking in teenagers and turning out upstanding young men and good citizens. Corny? Sure. But that's what Tubby

did, consistently, for a decade. And Pitino before him. Which isn't to say that everybody was squeaky clean, but by and large, Tubby's players grew as basketball players and as men.

March 31, 2009

John Calipari is hired.

BBD: I'm laughing. Hard. You're done, buddy. Any post by you under a UK heading is guaranteed hogshit from now on. Just remember all those times I said UK would be back....and all that shit I caught along the way.

The Thinker: lol, you said Clyde would be the one to lead them back tho.

BBD: I admit I fell for his whole "we're gonna play like Kansas" promise. I mean it took Self about five or six years before he got to a title, and he was losing in the first round to teams like Bucknell in the process. Clyde, as bad as some of his losses were, was only here for two. Basically that article about how Clyde treated the players was the end of it for me. And that came out the same day that the Cal talk really started to heat up. So it was all good.

TG: L.

BBD: Yeah, you're RIGHT! Calipari to UK is "just fucking horrible.

Mr. Sensible: Allow me, Grouch. Dude, it is an enormous risk for UK, a prestige program, to hire a KNOWN crook and for him to bring his crooked recruitment tactics to the school. You know what would happen to UK's standings if they went on probation due to the NCAA uncovering Calipari paying students to come to his team (again)? The same thing that happened to Indiana potentially.

BBD: I don't think UK lets any of that shit happen under their watch. They know that they can't fuck up again. Cal knows this. And, at the

expense of sounding elitist, I honestly think it'd take less operation in the "gray area" of recruiting at Kentucky than it would at Memphis or UMass.

May 27, 2009

The NCAA alleges major violations in Calipari's 2007/2008 Memphis team.

TG: I feel a curious mix of rage, vindication, and contempt. But mostly vindication.

BBD: Have fun pulling for Minnesota from now on, buddy. If this is enough to keep you FIRMLY away from UK basketball, that'd be fantastic.

TG: Why so mad? Apparently what I think is of tremendous concern to you. Why is that?

BBD: Oh I just don't like fair-weather UK "fans." You rooted AGAINST the UK basketball team for two seasons after he left. I will admit that I was wrong about Clyde (plus this lawsuit he filed should bring up even MORE bullshit concerning his tenure), but even if I HATED the guy while he was here, I'd still pull for Kentucky to win every single game. But I'll finish with this: If John Calipari gets caught doing dirt while he's at the University of Kentucky, I will take every L that ever existed, and I'll trade in this screen name. You will officially "win." I know that I've talked too much shit at this point to not put something on the table. And oh, luckily John Calipari isn't mentioned ANYWHERE in the official report. Too bad this isn't the "Derrick Rose took \$500,000 from Calipari" bullshit that you were hoping to hear.

TG: Like I give a fuck?

BBD: Throwing in the towel? Farewell then, big guy.

Comments? Suggestions? Complaints? Email khalladay@yahoo.com.

Roller derby: skater owned, skater operated

By Meg Marquis

When people hear that roller derby is alive and well in Lexington, they often picture striped tights, tattoos a-plenty, and violence. When people *see* roller derby in Lexington, watching the striped tights and tattoos sent flying across the rink floor from a vicious-looking takedown often causes first-time spectators to forget that they are witnessing a sport with rules, regulations, and lots of intense physical training.

The current incarnation of roller derby is nothing like its 70s counterpart: the action is real, and the sport is organized and owned by its participating skaters. The woman who plants a shoulder in the stomach in the name of preventing her opponent from scoring a point likely also serves on the finance committee of her derby league, dealing with taxes, accounts payable, and all manner of bureaucracy that is

surprisingly necessary to make a roller derby bout a reality.

While the entertainment value at a Rollergirls Of Central Kentucky (ROCK) bout is high without knowing a thing about the sport, you'll find yourself cheering at more than just the spills if you know a few facts about the game itself. First, focus on the skaters who have stars on their helmets (called - really - "helmet panties"). These women are called jammers, and they are the points-scorers for their teams, scoring a point for each opposing player they pass legally on the track. Once you watch a jammer try to make her way through the clump of teammates and opponents (called a pack) in game play, it's clear that everyone on the opposing team wants to stop her from passing them and everyone on her team wants to help her get through. If a jammer laps not just the opposing blockers but also the opposing jammer, she has earned a total of

five points in the holy grail of roller derby, the Grand Slam. This conflict of interest with a jammer and four blockers for each team on the track at the same time is what causes the hip checks, booty blocking, and assists that make roller derby so much fun to watch.

Of course, game play is regulated by an extensive set of rules laid out by Women's Flat Track Derby Association (WFTDA) and enforced by volunteer referees at each bout. Skaters are expected to know that they can't, for example, skate the wrong direction on the track, work with a teammate to clothesline an opponent, or block using their heads as weapons, as amusing as any of those scenarios might be. Breaking any of these rules enough times or with enough severity sends Very Bad Skaters to the penalty box, where they serve a minute of game time cooling their wheels and fuming over being caught in the act. Five trips to the box will get you thrown out of the bout, so while rollergirls may be known for being mean, they also have to play smart if they want to keep playing.

As if the full-contact action wasn't cool enough, ROCK, like other derby leagues across the nation, is a grassroots organization - it is fully skater-owned and skater-operated, and recruits with a resounding spirit of welcome. There is no single derby type: women of all body types, ages, educational levels, professional roles, and socioeconomic backgrounds can and do participate in the sport (with equal diversity amongst male and female referees and volunteers). Every member of the league has a voice in league decisions and works off-skates to develop business structures, market the league, foster community relationships through local philanthropic work, and yes, at the end of the day, put on exciting bouts for fans.



In the name of excitement, check out the stats the May 31 match between ROCK and The Bounty Hunters, a pickup team made up of skaters from Chemical Valley Rollergirls and Derby City Rollergirls. After this thrilling 119-61 win, you won't want to miss ROCK as they take on Radioactive City on July 3rd. Check out www.rockandrollergirls.com or www.myspace.com/rockandrollergirls for more information.



Regular practices, as seen in this photo, are required to maintain competitiveness.

Statistics from the bout of 5/31

Final Score:
Rock 119, Bounty Hunters 61

MVP for ROCK: Ellie Slay

MVP for Bounty Hunters:
Sweet Mama

Top Scorer ROCK: Ellie Slay

Top Scorer Bounty Hunters: Alka Miss

Most Penalties ROCK: Ryder Die, 7 trips to the box

Most Penalties Bounty Hunters: Bandita La Bruise, 5 trips to the box

Ejected: Bandita La Bruise (Bounty Hunters), from first period

Opinion

All they will call you will be...deportee

As Bob Dylan once sang, 'The times, they are a changin'.' And what a change 10 years can make.

Take for example the small river hamlet of Rabbit Hash, Ky. In 1998 the community elected an honorary mayor, a stray dog that won election over three humans, a pot-bellied pig, a donkey and two other dogs. The stray served three years as honorary mayor of Rabbit Hash before dying in 2001 at the age of 16.

Upon his death the community mourned his passing with a New Orleans style wake - complete with an animal parade and a kazoo band. All this for a dog. One very lucky dog.

If only Ana Romero's passing could have been so joyous, so celebrated, so honored. No, Romero died after allegedly hanging herself in a Franklin

County, Ky., jail cell. One can only imagine how lonely, forgotten and lost she felt in those final hours. She had been relegated to a life of purgatory for more than seven months in a legal system she knew nothing about and in a country that viewed her as a second class citizen.

But it's important to remember that Romero's human story isn't all that extraordinary. Those of us at Al's Bar on Thursday night for Brian Rich's compelling talk on Romero and the larger issue of immigrant detention within the U.S. know the story is also much larger. Romero, Rich noted, is but one of "more than 90 immigrant detainees [who] have died in custody" while awaiting deportation. Even here in Kentucky, we recently have witnessed the death

of Emmanuel Reyes, a detainee who apparently had gotten into "a fight with another inmate and was seriously beaten." He died six days after undergoing brain surgery.

To call Romero's death a shame is an injustice. An all-too regular abomination is more fitting. Not only because her death is shrouded in mystery, and not because she allegedly hung herself, but because unlike a stray dog in Northern Kentucky, no one cared enough about Ana Romero to even second guess how and why she died. Let alone celebrate or honor her death.

In 1976, Bob Dylan and Joan Baez performed the Woody Guthrie song "Los Gatos Canyon" during his Rolling Thunder Revue tour. Guthrie wrote the original lyrics following

a Jan. 29, 1948, plane wreck over California's Los Gatos Canyon. The crash killed four documented U.S. citizens and 28 undocumented Mexican migrant farm workers being flown to towns south of the U.S. border. Guthrie wrote the song out of a sense that the individual human stories of the undocumented workers had been subsumed in the papers by their status as "deportees."

Hearing Dylan and Baez in 1976 sing, "You won't have a name when you ride the big airplane. All they will call you will be ... deportees," and after reading about the treatment of Ana Romero in 2008, it's hard not to note a thread of continuity, from 1948 straight on up through today.

No, maybe the times they aren't a changin'.

Starting this week...

Lexington Free Market

"It's even better than a steal!"

participants encouraged

5:00-7:00 Wednesdays
in Al's parking lot

Letter to the editor

I am the executive director of The Fayette Alliance. The Fayette Alliance is Lexington's only land-use advocacy organization dedicated solely to protecting our renowned rural landscape in Fayette County and strengthening the city of Lexington through innovative infill redevelopment. Those interested can check out our website and work at www.fayettealliance.com.

Affordable housing is a key land-use policy and objective of our organization--and for that matter, our community's welfare. It was with great interest and appreciation that I read

Ms. Connors-Manke's article in your publication "Affordable Housing is a Public Good". Very insightful and well written.

Knox van Nagell, Lexington

North of Center welcomes your letters to the editor. Address correspondence to noceditors@yahoo.com. Please include your name and location.

Bring back Billy

3:42 A.M. It's starting to make a lot of sense.

Our reason for asking to bring Billy back is in large measure based on purely economical considerations. Clearly, President Lee Todd and side-kick AD Mitch Barnhart gambled and lost. We are not speaking, of course, in terms of wins and losses. If only it were that simple.

We have no doubt that, given he's allowed to remain coaching at Kentucky for six years time, Coach Cal will deliver to the citizens of Kentucky no less than seven final four finishes, most likely three nannies, and possibly one or two that stick after it's all said and done. So no, we don't question Cal's ability to deliver the nannies or the final fours. It is built. They will come.

But we gotta admit that, based purely on free market economics, the Bring Back Billy campaign makes a heck of a lot of sense.

Todd and the AD Boys bought at the peak of the market. Indeed, to the extent that President Todd has now claimed he had knowledge of the investigation during the hiring process, we need to start asking some serious questions. What did Todd know and when did he know it? We'd hate to think that, with his insider information regarding the eminent investigation of Coach Cal's old program, Todd engaged in any form of insider trading by pushing the Calipari stock when it was at its peak. But then again, why would Todd knowingly orchestrate a buyout of Cal at a cost detrimental to UK sports fans and students? That part sounds like gibberish to us.

Irrespective of these questions, the fact remains: had Todd and the

AD Boys waited until after the NCAA announced its investigation into Derrick Roses' SAT scores prior to entering the Memphis program, they may have gotten a way better deal on the hiring--perhaps as low as \$30 million (with options to purchase South Campus). Buying at peak oil frenzy, we surmise the UK brain trust effectively lost the filthy rich athletic donors who financed the entire deal as much as \$10 million over 10 years. (We've heard estimates as high as \$12 million over ten years.) In these trying economic times, you don't want to wish that even on your worst multi-million dollar enemy.

Nevertheless, we now have Cal at a cost of \$4 million per year. Billy G., however, is currently begging for \$2.5 million per year until his memo of agreement expires and he loses his blue card. Given that, arguably, Billy G. is at his lowest point in terms of earning potential, let's say we can re-get him for \$1.5 million. Why not, in these tough economic times, everyone needs a job, no matter how shitty the pay. And Billy's still available. If his remarks at the Griffin Gate news conference prior to being fired are any indication, he'd love the job back.

To be clear, we are not saying that Calipari was in any way breaking NCAA violations, nor are we saying that Calipari is not somehow worth on the free market the \$40 million dollars he's now making for coaching teenagers on how to place a ball in a hoop (and play good defense). Rather, we're suggesting his *market value* was at its peak at that time, that Billy G.'s is at a historical low point, and that--and this is the market speaking here--it's time we dump Cal and bring back Billy.

Slightly North of Center
takes on
THE PRISON SYSTEM

Thursdays, 6:00 PM
Late-spring talks with and by the community at Al's Bar
Price of Admission: caring

June 4: Chuck Fields on *Pot, Prisons, and the War on Drugs in Kentucky*

June 11: KFTC and Neighborhood Residents on *Voting Rights for Former Felons*

Bike Scavenger Race
Wednesday, June 24

Theme: building local power.

A fundraiser for Kentuckians for the Commonwealth.



Race will end at the Green Lantern.

Contact Tim Buckingham at politicalhero@gmail.com.

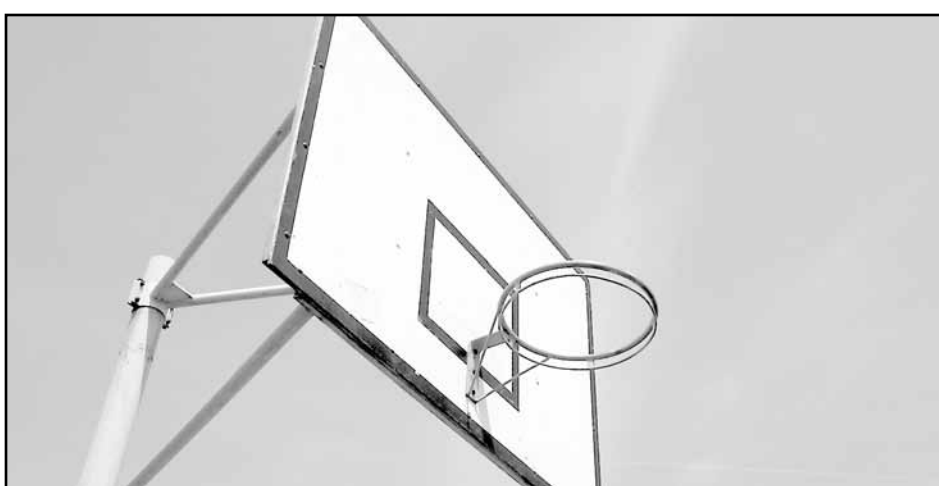
Lipstick Pistol

Funk, rock, and blues.

Friday, June 5 @ Lynaugh's
Saturday, June 6 @ Squire's Tavern

lipstickpistol.com

myspace.com/lipstickpistol



Violence in film (cont.)

continued from page 4

story ever could, and to this day has left me pondering the meaning of the film. This film was blocked from being exhibited in the U.S. When we showed it at Illinois State University, people were crying in the audience, and afterwards we spilled into the streets and made our way to a pub, where we argued into the night about the meanings of the film.

As with any difficult film, some members of the audience were angry that we had shown the film, and they had a reason to be angry. We listened patiently to their complaints, even if

we believed, ultimately, that the film should be seen. If you believe that a disturbing film is important and should be seen, you should respect contrary, disturbed and angry reactions. This is what you expected the film to do, and thus you should address its effects on those audiences. Do not become complicit in the further mystification of experience by dismissing their complaints; instead, engage them in the dialogue that art demands of its audiences.

A major problem with the contemporary usage of violence in film is that it has become an effect used to titillate for profit. Critical representations of

violence do not provide easy answers or easy entertainments. One of the most powerful and disturbing films of the last few years was Michael Haneke's *Caché* (France/Austria/Germany/Italy, 2005) which explores the aftereffects of repressed systemic and individual acts of aggression/violence in French society. It is minimalist and subtle in its presentation of violence, but the impact is long-lasting, reverberating in my mind still, causing me to question the impact of individual and societal repression of violent histories in my own culture. It forces us to reflect on our own societal repression of historical violence and our individual role in

this repression. Instances of violence can also cause us to focus on what gives life dignity and what is noble and ignoble in the human condition.

A critical filmmaker like the legendary Ousmane Sembene in his last film *Moolaadé* (Senegal/France/Burkina Faso/Cameroon/Morocco/Tunisia, 2004) can address the most troubling institutionalized acts of violence in a manner that requires people from all societies to reflect on the particular instance being represented, but at the same time encourages them to turn back their critical gaze upon their own society to seek similar cases of legitimated violence.

The Visitor (cont.)

continued from page 4

opportunities—though that would be painful enough. Returning from the United States, the son of a Syrian journalist jailed for sedition, carries the very real risk of physical danger. Since 2005, Amnesty International has been tracking the fate of more than 45 men returned to Syria from Western countries and imprisoned without charge or trial. The fate of several of them is completely unknown.

McCarthy might be (and has been) praised for presenting illegal immigrants as people, rather than a dark, faceless horde determined to rape America of her prosperity. To some extent he deserves this praise (I guess, though it seems pretty backhanded to me), but he never takes *The Visitor* much farther.

Immigrants are people, *The Visitor* says—people you may like or who may teach you useful things like how to play the drum. Still, they aren't Americans and if tragic things happen to them that neither you nor they have any control over, it's just the way things are (not, you know, something that could potentially be changed, like flawed government policy). At least you know how to play the drums, and you can stand by the window in the evening, drinking a glass of wine and remember those non-white, funny speaking people fondly, and congratulate yourself for being a sensitive, serious person, the kind that watches independent films, and who knows that Johannesburg is not in Senegal.

Which begs the question, is this treatment more ethical or intellectual than showing all illegal Arab

immigrants as faceless terrorists trying to blow up a bus? To the extent which it raises public complacency, I'm actually starting to think it might be worse. Certainly it's more patronizing.

The juxtaposition between a man learning about himself through playing a drum, and a man facing potential imprisonment upon return to the country he fled, is a profoundly uncomfortable one. But *The Visitor* never acknowledges the imbalance. The presentation is instead of "the sad but sweet, we can all touch peoples' lives" variety. If this is deliberate, a metaphor for Americans' general well-meaning but breathtakingly selfish relationships with illegal immigrants in general, then *The Visitor* is a profoundly cynical movie, for all its gentleness. If it isn't deliberate, then the film itself becomes that metaphor. And that is devastating.



The Visitor is now available on DVD and Blu-Ray.

DEWBURGER

Several years back, I heard the siren song of making art full time call louder and louder till I broke loose my bonds and jumped overboard, leaving my job as art director at a local television station. And I swam. Some days the seas were stormy, and some days the sun and breeze conspire to assure me I made the right decision. But still I swim.

Those sirens and that island were much farther away than I had estimated. I can foresee a time when I can no longer keep up this pace of swimming. But for now, the wisdom of age and the fire of youth are maybe in their most direct contact with each other, and the hands cup the water and pull it behind me in surer, more even strokes. The feet kick in solid rhythm.

I think these long thoughts when I paint, and when I work on color separations. But not when I carve wood blocks for engravings. Wood engraving is a higher percentage of zen. You have to herd your thoughts back into your head, back onto the block, back into your fingers that feel the tiny seismic activities in the wood.

I think about my forebears, building trunks and desks, beds and houses, running electric wire, testing for live current. I know they thought these long thoughts, too. About their children and their cities, their neighbors and neighborhoods, as they sawed and sanded. Did they ever wish they had a place to put these thoughts so their kids and grandkids would know them? So I could know them? Instead of leaving them just to fall to the floor and be swept out with the sawdust at the end of the day. Packed up with the pliers. Hinted at in black and white photographs.

I have found a place to leave my long thoughts and short musings, for my kids, for a while. I'd like to put some of this strong swimming to good use. This column could represent some of that good use. It could help me shed light on good causes, unique people, interesting events. Maybe I can blur the lines a bit and dabble in poetry, fiction, maybe share my artistic impulses with people. We can

talk about the nature of creativity, the strengthening of it by cross-pollination, about how sometimes one can get more to the essence of his or her own medium by a loose study of endeavors in fields tangential to their own, like music, literature, and bike polo. How one can...

What the hell are you talking about?

Oh, I'm doing a column or a comic strip for the new paper, North of Center. Maybe both.

About what?

Oh, giving a voice to the underdog, voicing opinions based on common sense, fighting for the right of...

And who are the characters?

Right now, just you and me, since you couldn't mind your own business.

So you're a character in your own strip?

I'll make more characters. These things take time. I can't believe I made you so belligerent.

So I'm not even based on a real person?

No, I think you're a comic foil. The cynical voice of reason.

That's stupid!

That's what you would say!

And where are we, in a coffee shop? Original! A bar would be better.

In a bar, the cynical voice of reason (that's you) loses his nuance and becomes loud and obnoxious, or worse, deceptively charming. Plus, I have to get up early these days.

So this strip is gonna fly on the strength of your style and conviction?

Yes, I guess so.

Please! For five bucks you'd draw a cubist jazz band-

DEWBURGER



John P. Lackey



The Cult Film Series at Al's Bar Presents...

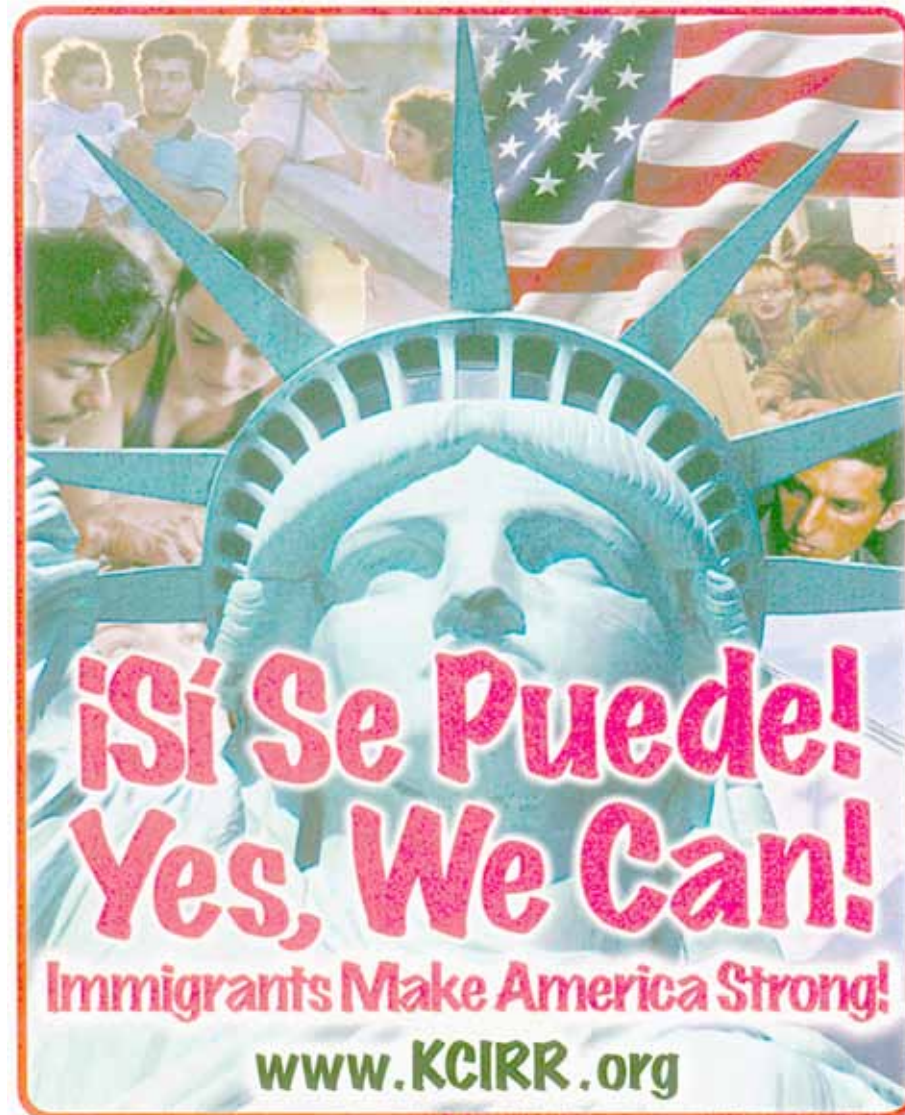
Countryman

A reggae cult-classic. Soundtrack includes some of the Caribbean's finest reggae singers and musicians, including Bob Marley & the Wailers and Steel Pulse. Director Dickie Jobson. 1982.

7:00 P.M. June 24

Al's Bar, corner of 6th and Limestone

...because "B" movies were meant to be seen in a bar.



North of Center is looking for writers and photographers to cover events worthy of reporting and commentary in north Lexington and elsewhere. Please contact Danny Mayer at mayer.danny@gmail.com if you're interested in contributing.