

# In the public sphere

## Shadow economies, part three

By Beth Connors-Manke

*In parts 1 and 2 of this series, Beth discussed sex trafficking and labor trafficking. Here, she ends the series by considering how the economy of human trafficking denies individuals a place in the public sphere.*

In the course of this series, I’ve gotten to speak with, or listen to, anti-trafficking activists of various stripes: lawyers, academic researchers, social workers, politicians, grassroots activists, and once a survivor of sex trafficking. In my research, I’ve found mostly statistics and anecdotes—articles on the topic generally read: “there are this many victims, and here’s a representative story.” When speakers who have survived trafficking come to town, they are usually women, and it’s usually about sexual slavery.

In other words, in most of the discourse about the issue, the response is numbers and drama. Sometimes the discussion wades into the structural elements, economic and cultural, that contribute to human trafficking, but rarely does it go deeply into those waters.

That’s to be expected. Anti-trafficking activists are attempting interventions that will affect lives right now, whether that be through legislation, law enforcement practices, social services, or consumer awareness. All of this is necessary and timely, and there is much work

to be done.

However, in my last piece in this series, I’d like to ask different questions, ones that reflect on the direction of our public sphere.

### Appearing in public

Political philosopher Hannah Arendt identifies two aspects of the “public realm.” First, that it is a space of appearance, meaning that it is the realm in which things are seen and heard by others and by ourselves. A bit abstract, but Arendt’s point is that what we put forth in front of others helps make the shared reality of a society. That which we hide away—our private shames, our collective societal sins—lives a shadowy existence and can feel less than real because it doesn’t see the light of day.

Let me give an example. In the past year, there was a suicide in my family. This was an intensely private tragedy, about which my family only speaks quietly. Rarely I have brought forth the suicide in public discussions about the pharmaceutical industry and irresponsible prescribing of depression medication. The private grief is distinct from the public discussion, which has an entirely different purpose: to change our society’s approach to depression. If I never speak about the suicide outside the privacy of family discussions, then the death of my uncle never comes to affect the larger world.

Arendt’s second point about the public realm: it “signifies the world itself,” that amazing construction of human politics, culture, arts, and science. In Arendt’s view, we hold the public world in common, yet we are separated by it at the same time. Although it may seem a radical idea in our current social and political climate, Arendt believes we can share our public world without abdicating our particular selves. She thinks that we can be many, but not the same, and still live in community together. In other words, I don’t have to make everyone else be like me in order to live with them. I don’t have to kill you if you have different religious or political beliefs; I don’t have to oppress you if you are racially, ethnically, or economically different from me. I don’t have to shut you out of the public world. It’s a fact of life, says Arendt, that humans have many ways of being—why work against that?

The link between the two aspects of the public sphere (I’m getting to human trafficking soon, I promise) is that we must allow all kinds of people to “appear” in the shared public realm. When we deny them that appearance, they are forced into the shadows and away from the discussions that shape who and what we are as a society. One current example of denying persons

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# Proposal for radical arterial surgery

*Another Creative for Common Sense position paper.*

Two recent downtown traffic developments have piqued the curiosity of we Creatives for Common Sense. First has been the admission by Downtown Development Authority Executive Director Jeff Fugate that creating a vibrant and workable downtown--and not the specific creation of two-way streets--should be the primary goal of any city project. Second has been the recent “modest proposal” for downtown traffic realignment proffered by *NoC* writer David Shattuck.

Accordingly, we Creatives endeavored to create our own downtown traffic model, one that embraces Fugate’s desire for a workable and holistic downtown, and one that eschews Shattuck’s plans for minor “holistic medicine” in favor of performing radical surgery on our downtown traffic arteries.

CfCS traffic projection models are based on two general assumptions: (1) cars are fucking expensive, spew shit-tons of harmful carbon energy into the air, and generally help condition us to become economically unhealthy anti-social slob; (2) therefore, in the somewhat-near future we will (or ought) to be prioritizing less of our precious public transportation space to their existence.

The nut of the CfCS plan involves keeping Main, Vine and Short Streets one-way while reducing by one the number of auto-traffic lanes in operation on each the three thoroughfares. In short, we envision re-engineering Main/Vine/Short streets to include a two-lane barriered-off inner-city bike/horse highway, a public transport/emergency vehicle lane running next to it, and a single one-way lane reserved for commercial/private traffic. This design pattern, our models indicate, will calm traffic traveling upon the city’s major thoroughfares, promote pedestrian life and healthy communities, and reduce the city’s atrociously large carbon footprint and financial commitment to road maintenance.

### Calm carbon-burning traffic

Current downtown traffic models assume that increases in downtown auto traffic will calm (slow) street traffic and enliven pedestrian commercial activity. CfCS models, by contrast, suggest that the same goal can be accomplished when fewer cars move more slowly on decreased amounts of road space. Here is why:

Our CfCS ad-hoc Subcommittee on Traffic Analysis models indicate that an estimated 20 percent of downtown auto-goers will become so enraged by changes proposed in the CfCS plan that they will pledge via an avalanche of *Lexington Herald Leader* Discus comments to never ever drive downtown again. Yet despite the expected plunge in auto traffic, CfCS models predict that when what remains of downtown traffic gets forced onto fewer roads, a simultaneous traffic calming (which is to say traffic-causing) effect will occur.

We are of course mindful that in choosing to calm our gas-burning auto traffic, we also potentially choose to increase our county’s carbon emissions. Writing in *North of Center*, David Shattuck has cited an Austin, Texas traffic study that projected a 10-13 percent increase in air pollution levels that would accompany the slower-moving traffic of two-way streets. A 2007 Lexington

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# Facebook discussions

By Keith Halladay

I got into it with Michael Benton on Facebook last week, and I’m struggling to understand why.

Michael is a frequent contributor to *NoC*, as longtime readers may recognize, and as of this semester we’re colleagues in the BCTC Humanities Division faculty, thanks in large part to his formal recommendation. Prior to that we were student-teachers together in the University of Kentucky English Department, and, for a short while when I first moved to Lexington, we were next-door neighbors.

That’s almost a decade of acquaintance, and during that time I cannot recall us arguing even once, about anything. Which seems odd, as we’re both loud, opinionated, and at least a little arrogant. Then again, on matters social and political, we’re more or less on the same side; broadly speaking, we have little to argue about.

But when on my Facebook news feed I saw that Michael had posted, as a commentary on the tent city constructed on Avenue of Champions by prospective UK basketball ticket buyers, a link to a blog post that reproduced some of Noam Chomsky’s comments on the cultural role of spectator sports, well, I got my dander up, and I decided to respond. The details of Chomsky’s argument, and of my objections, are not material to the present discussion, so I’ll summarize: Chomsky took a position that organized spectator sports reinforce social divisions and are based on arbitrary loyalties; I replied with a list of examples, a couple involving European soccer clubs, that I believed weakened Chomsky’s argument, and suggested he hadn’t thought as profoundly about sports as he had about a great many other topics.



A couple of hours later Michael posted a lengthy rebuttal of my points that began by noting what he saw as the irony inherent in my citing the examples of European soccer clubs, some of which are notorious for the violent fanaticism of their supporters, in an argument claiming sports did not necessarily reinforce an “us versus them” mentality. And in closing he wondered if Chomsky’s remarks hadn’t “touched a nerve.”

In fact the only thing that had touched a nerve was the accusation that something had, in fact, touched a nerve, but that indignation was tempered by the growing realization that I wasn’t even interested enough in the subject to muster the mental energy to attempt to refute Michael’s rebuttal. So I posted what was essentially a non-response, which led, just a couple of replies later, to my accusing him of stooping to the

ad hominem fallacy, and his accusing me of same. And I was so aggravated, by that point, that had Michael been in the room with me I would have happily punched him in the face.

### Social divisions and friendship communities

How did it come to this? How did two reasonable, highly educated people, who have only minor differences in outlook on any of the important issues of the day, sink to such depths of frustration that they resorted to personal attacks on one another in the span of a dozen Facebook messages? Had we simply sat down at a coffee shop and chatted, our body language, tone of voice, and shared belief in a basic standard of courtesy would have allowed us to engage the other’s position in a

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The Kentucky Theater marquee. Photo by Danny Mayer.

# The Kentucky at 90

By Michael Dean Benton

The Kentucky Theater, one of Lexington’s most beloved cultural centers, will celebrate its 90th anniversary this October. Originally opening in 1922, the theater is one of the oldest cinemas still in operation, surpassing even the world famous Los Angeles Grauman’s Theater (also built in 1922 but not actually opened until 1927). Situated on the southern side of the Main Street artery running through town, the theater continues to serve the Lexington community by hosting a wide range of cultural events. It is not hyperbole to say that this region would be a cinematic wasteland if it wasn’t for the recent releases the Kentucky brings to town. Not only has it operated as the primary Lexington venue for international, experimental and independent cinema, it also hosts a number of film revivals, festivals and special screenings throughout the year. In the summer its Classic Film series hosts capacity crowds of enthusiastic audiences either revisiting old cinematic favorites or encountering them for the first time on the big screen. Fall brings the Rosa Goddard International Film Festival, which this year re-introduced viewers to world cinema classics *Band of Outsiders* (France 1964), *Diva* (France 1981), *Knife in the Water* (Poland 1962), and which premiered in Lexington the critically acclaimed *Weekend* (United Kingdom 2011). Of course, the Kentucky does not just screen films. On Mondays, it plays

host to Michael Jonathon’s weekly music series *Woodsongs Old-Time Radio Hour*, heard on over 500 radio stations and archived online. (Long before I had ever visited or lived in Lexington, I was a regular listener to this radio show.) The Kentucky and its workers also host children’s events on weekend mornings, Troubadour Music concerts, business meetings, special community events, midnight cult movies, and viewing parties for UK basketball games. They even host a regular church service on Sundays. A sure sign of its iconic status in our collective conscious: when we refer to something or somebody “playing at the Kentucky,” we all know what and where we mean.

## Theater renovations

In 1987, the Kentucky Theater was damaged by a fire that started in a restaurant next door. Over the next five years the theater was renovated and had its grand re-opening in 1992. Then Mayor Scotty Baesler had the foresight to have the Lexington Fayette Urban County Government purchase the property through the sale of bonds. While the LFUCG holds the deed, a private firm leases the building and Fred Mills manages it. Though the renovations allowed the theater to continue operating for the past two decades, the Kentucky is once again at a crossroads, its 90 year old body in need of care and some upgrades.

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# Occupy Lexington turns one

## On language and action

By Patrick O’Dowd

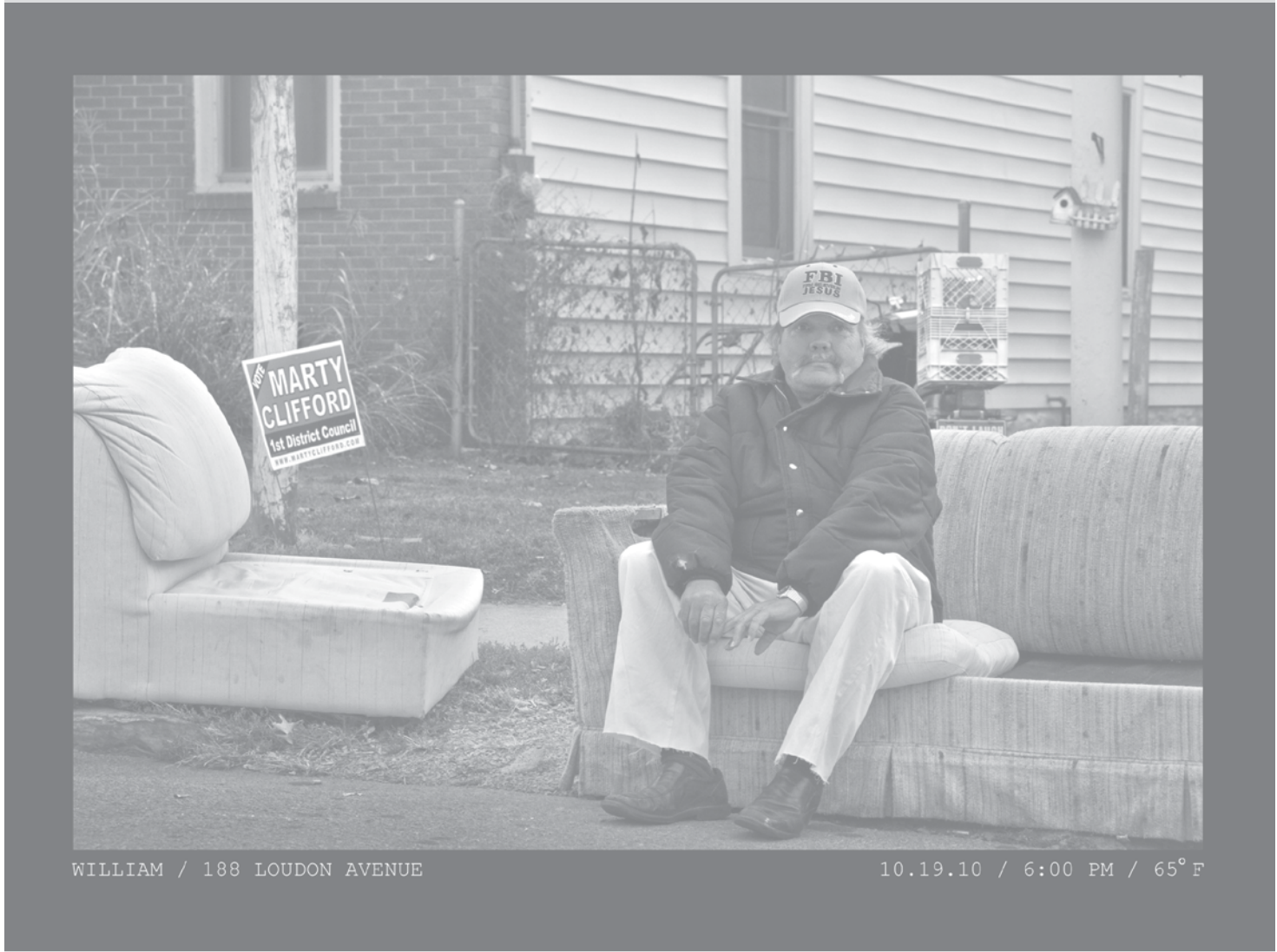
There are two ways someone could look at Occupy Lexington’s one year anniversary rally in Phoenix Park: 1) as a grim picture of what remains of the national movement 365 days later; or 2) as a fair representation, for good or ill, of what the Occupy movement was from the beginning. A pedestrian passing Lexington’s one year occupation rally might have to be forgiven for taking the former view of the movement. With a hand-painted banner, a table of supplies and speaking equipment, it was not that the rally looked underprepared. It was that those remaining to remember the anniversary seemed merely to be talking to themselves, no longer meaningfully engaged—if they ever were—with the broader political moment. A harsh criticism for a local rally? Perhaps, but one that seems to reflect honestly the movement’s current condition, here in Lexington as elsewhere. Yet, it was on the same day as New York City’s Occupy Wall Street protests that Mother Jones released the video of Mitt Romney—the one percent incarnate, if there ever was such a body—blasting forty-seven percent of the country as little more than government dependents. Romney’s reveal is a reminder that the ideas that underpinned the Occupy movement—ideas that shined a light on the rapidly growing economic disparity of this country and emphasized this colossal problem’s universal nature by invoking the first person plural “We are the 99%”—are ones at the very core of the current presidential campaign. While speakers at the Lexington rally spoke to this essential relevance, there was an overwhelming sense that these words meant little in terms of action; little in terms of meaningful change (big or small) that would impact Lexington’s 99 percent, much less its members sleeping on the benches in the midst of the rally itself. This sense has less to do with their words themselves

and more to do with the history of the movement. It is simply hard to take chants of “Banks got bailed out — We got sold out” seriously with the inability of the Occupy movement across the local to national spectrum to translate their anger at a system that inherently favors corporations of citizens when you strongly suspect from past experience that they have no real plan outside of continuing to chant. The language of economic inequality and hoped for justice, which the Occupy movement both helped to form and codify, will be seen as its legacy. From the beginning, Occupy chose not to engage directly with existing political machines. That decision, as I think the past year has shown, has left the movement with little tangible evidence of success. The exception has been this language. While the Democratic Party and its chief, Obama, have not co-opted the language wholesale—a decision you can judge on your own—Occupy’s lexicon now serves dutifully in the party’s arsenal of attacks and appeals. No doubt, this is not the outcome those at the early general assemblies across the country would have imagined a year ago, but by choosing to not directly engage in politics beyond protest and occupation, they have left their words and their power to be wielded by others. We may wish for a broader embrace of Occupy’s language from the established left, but change of this sort only comes over time. This is even more exaggerated in the context of the movement’s failure to apply meaningful political pressure to those already in office, whether that be at city council or in the West Wing. In its current role, Occupy Wall Street can only serve as the vocal conscience of the Democratic Party and the left writ large. It can continue to rail, chant and beat the drums to remind Americans—members of the ninety nine percent whether they self-identify or not—that inequality exists across the spectrum; that those suffering need not do so alone; and that there is power in both language and numbers. The question is whether or not continuing to rail, chant, and beat the drums both literal and proverbial is enough. Or are we missing another, equally important, piece to this puzzle? The flash in the pan protests in New York and the anemic gathering in Lexington suggests that we are. The speakers at the Lexington rally and the few who came simply to show support are clearly individuals dedicated to the cause and whose energy is essential to the movement. However, Occupy has shied away from half the battle: channeling the energy of these individuals into something where the factory worker, student, or retiree can see an effect. The movement has left these potential members unable to answer the ever important question of “Are you better off?” with a “yes.”

At only one year old, Occupy Wall Street and its Lexington encampment are young political forces, but decisions must be made now if it is not to wither on the vine, leaving its innate vitality to rot or, worse, get plucked by those who may not have the movement’s interests at heart. Sitting at the rally and listening to the speakers, looking around at the faces who filled Phoenix Park and considering my own debt-ridden future, there was an overwhelming sense that now more than ever is the time for Occupy to change gears and bring its words into action for the good of Lexington and the country. Now is no time to give up the ghost.

# William, 188 Loudon Avenue

William came out of the house in front of which the two discarded pieces sat just as we were preparing to knock on the front door. Though he was on his way out—he hopped on his motor bike and drove away as soon as we took his picture—he seemed neither surprised nor inconvenienced by our request and readily sat down for a photograph.





“Per usual, the time/space continuum was cracked and brains were melted.” Captain Commanokers

OCTOBER 2012

# ROCK beaten, bruised

## Christianburg rains on Robin Souls’ parade

By Sunny Montgomery

On September 8, I attended the Rollergirls of Central Kentucky’s (ROCK) second to last home bout of the season against Christianburg, Virginia’s New River Valley Rollergirls (NRV), a.k.a the Bruisin’ Burgs Rollergirls, who to my horror were sporting the same pink and black jerseys as ROCK.

Regular fans of the roller derby know the sport is fast-paced with lots of action. It can be difficult enough to follow without the added complexity of both teams dressed in the same colors. Twenty minutes before the bout, I was confused. This was not a good sign, in hindsight an omen of what was to come.

### Baring it all

At ten minutes till seven, introductions gave way to a special announcement from Kevin Norfleet, who, we learned, is boyfriend to ROCK’s Robin Souls. Or was. Norfleet took the mike and then Robin Souls’ hand, dropped onto one knee and proposed. The entire arena squealed. I cried a little, and Robin Souls returned to the sidelines where her teammates enveloped her.

Then, moments before the bout began, NRV pulled off their matching jerseys, revealing white tees with Sharpie-penned names and numbers scrawled across the fronts. I breathed a sigh of relief. All was well. The starting whistles blew.

The jammers were off, and as quickly as it began, it was over. I blinked, bewildered, drew a question mark in my notebook. A new jam began. Robin Souls,

betrothed blocker, was instantly sent to the penalty box for an elbow foul. Seconds later, the NRV jammer went to the box. Then ROCK’s jammer joined them. The referees called an official timeout.

The packs were so tight that I had a hard time distinguishing one player from the next. Teammates clung to each other’s jerseys, forming a nearly impenetrable wall and resulting in a tangled mess of rollergirls and lots and lots of penalties.

With five minutes left before half-time, three of ROCK’s players were in the penalty box, leaving just two on the track. The referees called another timeout. I drew another question mark. I glanced at the scoreboard. I had no idea how it had happened, but NRV had the lead: 51 to 34.

Penalties and official time-outs continued to dominate the bout. At one point, ROCK’s Kitty O’ Doom was handed a major insubordination—which occurs when a skater willfully fails to comply with a referee—while standing still on the track, waiting for a new jam to begin.

“What the heck just happened out there?” announcer Bill Widener shouted. Another timeout was called. Half-jokingly, half-seriously, the roller-girls let their bodies fall limp to the track in melodramatic frustration.

**Regret nothing**

Later I would learn that the Non-Skating Officials (NSO), responsible for tracking scores and penalties and communicating the same to the refs, were relatively new. The excessive number of



Rainbow Smite showboats after being ejected from the bout. Photo by Lewis Gardner.

time-outs was, in part, caused by the referees having to straighten out the NSO.

Regardless, it was exasperating and finally came to a head when, after having been sent to the penalty box seven times (the maximum allowable) ROCK’s Rainbow Smite was ejected from the game. On her way to the locker room, she turned towards the audience and lifted her jersey to expose her bare belly, where she had written in thick black marker “I REGRET NOTHING.”

“It was messy in the extreme penalty-wise,” Rainbow told me after the bout. “ROCK was having a hard time knowing what some of our penalties were.”

I spent most of the bout utterly mystified, and it was nice to know I was in good company. However it happened, NRV ended up winning: 191 to 86. So let’s just sweep that mess under the bed for now and focus on what’s really important: Robin Souls said “yes.”

*The last home bout of the season, September 29, will occur after press time. Merry roller season, derbyiers! It was a great year for rolling with the derby.*

## Announcements

### Sandwich Shop 2 at Institute 193

Institute 193 is pleased to announce a new collaborative project with chef Johnny Shipley (formerly of Table 310), titled SANDWICH SHOP 2.

Shipley will prepare pa-jeon kim chi belly pancakes that will be available in Institute 193’s gallery from 12-2 PM, October 22-26.

Pa-jeon are Korean pancakes made with eggs, rice flour, and scallions. Shipley’s version will also include carrots, kim chi, and pork belly.

The pa-jeon will be for sale for \$5 each. All proceeds support the mission of Institute 193—to advance the careers of contemporary Southern artists and enrich the cultural landscape of central Kentucky.

In 2010, Shipley collaborated with Institute 193 on the first SANDWICH SHOP, serving banh mi sandwiches in Institute 193 gallery space.

### GLSO Film Festival

SQecial Media and the Lexington GLSO (Gay Lesbian Services Organization) are teaming up to presnet a GLSO Queer Film Series, Films will screen on Sunday afternoons at 2 o’clock in the Farish Theatre at the downtown branch of The Lexington Public Library. Admission is free.

*October 7 - Northsea Texas* - Bavo Defurne (2011 Dutch with English subtitles) Eplores the discovery that you are different and what happens after that discovery.

*October 21- T.B.A.* - Due to film distributor restrictions the second film, about coming of age and coming out, can be announced on our web site and at the library only.

*October 28- Heartbeats* - Xavier Dolan (2010 French with English subtitles) This Cannes Film Festival award-winning dark comedy plums the depths of friendship and obsession

Please e-mail or call Iya at 859-255-4316 if you have any questions or suggestions.



Blocker Ann Bones faces off against NRV’s Jammer. Photo by Lewis Gardner.

October 25,  
6:30pm

The Loudoun  
House

Break Bread!

Castlewood Neighborhood Association Annual Fall Potluck

# Outside the Spotlight

## Brötzmann

Largely through the efforts of northside resident Ross Compton, the Outside the Spotlight Jazz series is ten years into its existence in Lexington. Show #140 took place at Embrace Church at 1015 N. Limestone on September 10.

The show featured world renowned saxophonist Peter Brötzmann, who is touring with vibes player Jason Adasiewicz.

Per usual, the time/space continuum was cracked and brains were melted.



Photo and text by Captain Commanokers.



# I used to play here

## Remembering Larry Gibson

By **Dave Cooper**

An American hero has passed away. Larry Gibson, the “Mountain Keeper” from West Virginia who fought for over 25 years to save his family’s ancestral land on top of Kayford Mountain, died on his beloved mountain of a heart attack on Sunday, September 9.

Larry fought the good fight. One of the first West Virginians to try to organize people against mountaintop removal (MTR), he fought longer and harder against that destructive process of coal extraction than anyone else ever could. Beginning as a volunteer with the West Virginia Citizen Action Group (WV-CAG) in the mid-1980s, Larry soon joined the Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition (OVEC) and, with the help of OVEC organizer Laura Forman, began speaking publicly against MTR by the late 1990s.

When I first met Larry in March, 1998, I wasn’t too sure what to think of him. He was not a polished speaker, and it was sometimes difficult to understand what he was saying. But like me, he was a former General Motors employee, and he had a lot of good GM stories from his days on the assembly line in Lordstown, Ohio, so we hit it off.

Meeting Larry changed my life. Shortly after hearing him speak, I visited Kayford Mountain, and 14 years later I’m still working on the mountaintop removal issue.

He changed many other lives, too, and over the long run he may have done more than any other individual to build the anti-MTR movement. You see, I was not alone in my visit to Kayford Mountain; Larry invited everyone who heard him speak to visit there. Always generous with his time, he treated all who came to visit his mountain equally, whether it was a group of 10 students from a local high school or Mike Wallace of *60 Minutes*. Partially as a result, his home place became the birthplace of the movement against mountaintop removal. Some people said Larry reminded them of “The Lorax” from the Dr. Suess book, and I think they are right—the Lorax spoke for the trees, while Larry spoke for the mountains. (Both also had that same little white moustache.)

A constant presence at rallies, meetings and gatherings across the world, Larry developed into an important public figure in the fight to stop coal companies from destroying the land they worked. In 1999, he walked across West Virginia with Julian Martin of the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy to bring greater attention to the MTR

issue. The same year he was featured in an excellent *Nightline* episode, “Digging Deep: The Cost of Cheap Energy,” one of what would become many featured spots in the growing archive of cinematic and print journalism looking at the travesty of mountaintop removal. In the *Nightline* episode, he guided ABC’s Barry Serafin around his Kayford Mountain home and the nearby ravages of a mountaintop removal site. “I don’t care if it’s a coal company, oil company or chemical company,” he told Serafin on camera, “I’ll go anywhere and talk against the destruction of what’s happening here. I’ll go anywhere.”

By the time of his death, Gibson’s travel anywhere approach to talk about his mountain and the ravages of moun-

Mountaintop Removal Road Show, he would always ask his audience:

“What do you have in your own circle of life that is so precious that you cannot put a price on it? What would it be? And if someone tried to come and take it from you, what would you do—how far would you go to stand for it? For me, it was my land. For me, it was my mountain.”

This personal connection Larry felt for his land, an intimacy that compelled him to act, was always at the heart of his activism. As he asked Serafin in the 1999 episode of *Nightline*, “How can you do this to your own back yard? Where you gonna play? I used to play here.” The mountains for him were not abstract containers of mineral wealth

the West Virginia of his youth—“the mountains with no boundaries, no limits,” as he described them in the 2007 documentary *Mountaintop Removal*. He, at least, is in a better place. But what should we the living do now?

This is an incredibly important struggle. Burning coal is at the heart of the climate crisis; those who study global warming make unsettling predictions. If some of these experts are right, we are fast approaching a “tipping point” beyond which rising global temperatures cannot be reversed, no matter what we do. The earth will just keep warming and warming.

Who are the people trying to stop the destruction of the life support systems keeping us all alive? There aren’t very many of them, and even fewer are willing to put their own life and safety on the line. Larry was one of those people. He was fearless and he was tireless. If the human race is able to survive runaway global climate change, there will one day be statues and monuments to heroes of the planet like Larry Gibson.

Judy Bonds, Laura Forman and Ken Hechler will have giant statues erected in their honor. James Hansen, Bill McKibben and Harry Caudill will have great bronze plaques detailing their struggles to stop the worst ravages of coal. They will all be in the history books, and future students will read about them and wonder why more average people did not try to help stop mountaintop removal and runaway climate change. They will look at the photos of RAMPS and Mountain Justice activists



*Larry Gibson being arrested as part of a non-violent demonstration against mountaintop removal in West Virginia Governor Joe Manchin’s office, March 2007. Photo by Dave Cooper.*

taintop removal included time spent in protests, such as the Washington D.C. “Appalachia Rising” protests of 2010, and speaking at countless gatherings and meetings in places ranging from San Francisco to New Guinea, from numerous Appalachian coal communities to South American mining towns.

As a speaker and developing community leader, Larry owed a lot to his mentor Ken Hechler, the legendary former Congressman and West Virginia Secretary of State who has been a lifelong crusader against strip mining abuses. The only member of Congress who marched with Dr. Martin Luther King while in office, Ken taught Larry lessons from the Civil Rights struggle about the importance of non-violence in the campaign against mountaintop removal. Ken’s mentoring helped push Larry to channel his thoughts and righteous anger, and to place his struggle within larger systems of oppression. When we toured together on the

needing to be tapped. They were home.

I recall a scene from Nashville filmmaker Jeff Barrie’s documentary *Kilowatt Ours*. While Larry was offering Jeff a tour of his family cemetery on Kayford, they hear a blast coming from the mine site surrounding Larry’s home. Hurrying to the edge of the mountain as Jeff’s camera catches the huge cloud of dust rising above the moonscape, Larry stops to ponder his situation. “People, a lot of people, ask me if I have a picture of the mountain before it was destroyed. For one, you can’t take a picture of a mountain while you’re on it, but for two, Lord have mercy, why should you take a picture of a mountain? It’s gonna be there forever. At least I thought ...”

### Heroes

Right now, Larry is happily roaming the green, unscarred mountains of

being arrested for non-violent civil disobedience with the same sense of wonder and disbelief that we feel today when we see photos of civil rights protestors being attacked by Sheriff Bull Connor’s dogs. They will wonder, how could so many people have stood by and let the mountains be destroyed.? We need more Mountain Keepers like Larry—do you dare to be one, too?

*Friends and family of Larry Gibson will celebrate his life and legacy on Sunday, October 14, 2-6pm at the Charleston, West Virginia Municipal Auditorium, located on the corner of Virginia and Truslow Streets, across from the Charleston Town Center Mall. Please visit the Keepers of the Mountains website and make a donation in memory of Larry.*

<http://mountainkeeper.blogspot.com/>

## The Kentucky, cont.

*Continued from page 2*

When I sat down recently with manager Fred Mills to discuss plans for renovating the theater, one thing was immediately obvious: even at an advanced age, the Kentucky Theater continues to live a vigorous life. Despite the fact that it was noon on a Wednesday and the theater was not yet open, the phone rang constantly, as did the front bell.

As I listened, Mills explained that the renovation plans were initiated by growing concerns about the deteriorating conditions of some of the older fixtures, the carpet, the seats and the marquee. Many of the light fixtures in the main theater need replacing, and the plan is to switch to LED bulbs for better energy efficiency. The seats and carpet installed in 1992 are worn out from two decades of constant daily traffic. The distinctive front marquee, in operation since the theater opened, has a slew of missing or cracked background panels, and its light fixtures and neon tubing also need to be replaced. The lobby/concessions area, where everyone gathers excitedly before and after events, also needs repairs and a new coat of paint.

Most pressing, Mills says, is the need to switch to digital projectors. In order to keep pace with the projected industry-wide switch in 2013 to solely digital distribution of studio releases, the Kentucky must purchase new projectors, new sound systems and a new screen. Though it will retain the equipment to screen 35 mm films and plans to offer films in that format, not paying for the digital projectors potentially leaves the theater without the ability to screen new releases.

It is projected that all of these updates and repairs will cost at least \$1 million. A fundraising group called the Friends of Kentucky Theater, chaired by former Vice-Mayor Isabel Yates, has been set up to facilitate the necessary fundraising. Those who wish to volunteer their time or expertise with fundraising can contact Isabel at [imyates@windstream.net](mailto:imyates@windstream.net). Checks can be made payable to “Friends of the Kentucky Theatre” and mailed to the Bluegrass Community Foundation, 250 W. Main Street #1220, Lexington, KY 40507. All donations are tax-deductible through the Bluegrass Community Foundation.

## Kentucky Theater: community hub

*Current and former residents sound off on the Kentucky Theater.*

“If something cool was coming out and I knew it would never screen anywhere else in our neck of the woods, odds were good that the Kentucky would have it.” Carl Root, Tampa, Florida, teacher/student at University of South Florida

“[I]t was an excuse for my friends and I to dress crazily and go to Rocky Horror at midnight and then go to Tolly-Ho afterward. Those midnight showings were, like, the social occasion to be at as a teen.” Leah Dick, Pulaski, Virginia, studying Communications at Virginia Tech University

“It’s my preferred first stop for a quick getaway from work or for a romantic date night—it’s something about that grand theater hall that makes it feel like you’re out on the town.” Martin Mudd, Lexington, KY, teacher at Montessori High School

“I’ve often thought there are some things I would take drastic action to preserve in my community, if ever they were in trouble. I’ve imagined a couple things I would chain myself to in order to save them, channeling Julia Butterfly Hill. The UK Arboretum is one. The Kentucky Theater is another. While a student at EKU I would drive to Lexington on the weekends to catch films unavailable anywhere else. The KY is community- from the lovely folks who greet you at the ticket booth to Fred always quick to smile and the counter staff who seem to actually enjoy working there. It is a place of music and art and activism.” Lisa Conley, graduate student, Sociology



# Obama and the filmmaking conspiracists

By Bill Berkowitz

In presidential election years ugly abounds, as exemplified by 1988’s Willie Horton advertisement and the concerted Swift Boat Veterans’ attack on John Kerry in 2008. This year, a chunk of ugly is being delivered in the form of a pair of conservative documentaries. One, Dinesh D’Souza’s *2016: Obama’s America*—in which he argues that President Barack Obama’s Kenyan father inspired Obama to embrace anti-colonialist, anti-American views—has become the highest grossing conservative documentary in box office history, and the second highest grossing doc after Michael Moore’s *Fahrenheit 9/11*. The other documentary, Joel Gilbert’s *Dreams From My Real Father: A Story of Reds and Deception*, takes ugly to another level. And although Gilbert’s has done nothing notable at the box office, it may, due to an apparently well-funded project aimed at delivering it for free to hundreds of thousands of Ohioans, affect the outcome of the election.

Despite being ignored by most of the mainstream media, People for the American Way’s Right Wing Watch pointed out that the film “has had a remarkably wide reach. In September, the *New York Post* ran a full-page ad [titled “Obama’s Big Lie Revealed”] for the movie.... [and] *World Net Daily* reported that Gilbert has sent 1 million copies of the film to households in Ohio and plans to send 1 million more out in swing states. Gilbert and [Swift Boater Jerome] Corsi both fault the mainstream media for ignoring their film, which Gilbert claims they’re doing ‘because they support national health care.’”

Where Gilbert is getting the money to send all these free DVDs remains unknown.

Gilbert’s film implies that both D’Souza and the Birthers (who claim Obama wasn’t born in this country) are totally off base. Obama couldn’t have adapted his Kenyan father’s views, because, Gilbert charges, his father wasn’t Kenyan.

Obama’s Marxist worldview, Gilbert argues, was inherited from the man who was Obama’s real biological father, Frank Marshall Davis, an

African American journalist, poet and member of the Communist Party USA.

According to Gilbert, the 97-minute film narrated by an Obama impersonator—produced by Highway 61 Entertainment and directed by Gilbert—maintains that Davis was Obama’s “real father, both biological and ideological, and indoctrinated Obama with a political foundation in Marxism and an anti-White world view.”

Gilbert goes after the public’s perception that Obama is “a nice man with an inspiring family story”: “Now, it seems likely President Obama intentionally hid a deeply disturbing family background and a Marxist agenda. If this is true, he is no longer likeable.”

The film’s director has a string of credits, including such films as *Atomic Jihad: Ahmadinejad’s Coming War and Obama’s Politics of Defeat* (2010), and *Farewell Israel: Bush, Iran and the Revolt of Islam* (2008), *Bob Dylan: Revealed, Elvis Found Alive and Paul McCartney Really Is Dead*. He is also a contributing editor for FamilySecurityMatters.org.

People for the American Way’s Right Wing Watch recently reported that “[i]n a National Press Club appearance this summer, Gilbert expanded on his theory, claiming that Obama and strategist David Axelrod were both ‘red diaper babies,’ born of communist parents to carry on the cause; that Obama is pursuing Davis’s ‘dreams of a forced imposition of a classic Stalinist-Marxist agenda upon America at home and abroad’; and that Obama worked with ACORN to cause the subprime mortgage crisis as part of a plan to ‘use minorities and the poor to collapse capitalism.’”

According to a transcript of his National Press Club appearance, Gilbert maintained that Obama’s election “was not a sudden political phenomenon. It was the

culmination of an American socialist movement that Frank Marshall Davis nurtured in Chicago and Hawaii, and has been quietly infiltrating the US economy, universities, and media for decades.”

Gilbert went on to make a number of accusations against most of the mainstream media, leftist news sites, and at least one conservative news site, for “gross violations of the Journalist’s Creed.” He accused the news divisions of ABC, NBC, and CBS network “of violating the public trust by refusing to cover” and “ignoring” his film; MSNBC of a “vile campaign of lies and misrepresentations to protect ... Obama’s false narrative”; *Newmax.com* “of censorship and suppression of the news”; all leftist website-based news organizations “of intentional bias”; and “all the mainstream print media ... of intentionally suppressing the truth about ... Obama’s history and agenda.”

Interestingly enough, Gilbert’s imaginings relegates much of the theorizing of D’Souza, along with the stuff the Birthers (Donald Trump, former Swift Boater Jerome Corsi, Alan Keyes, Orly Taitz, Sheriff Joe Arpaio, et al.) have been peddling over the past several

years to the dustbin of history.

Taitz, a pioneering Birther, is particularly miffed at Gilbert and Corsi: “Jerome Corsi is destroying the case on which I worked for 4 years 24/7/365. He is gratuitously making up an American father for Obama. What is his motivation to do so? Tell WND and Corsi to stop this,” she wrote on her website.

As of this writing [September 28] Gilbert’s film had garnered 122 customer reviews at Amazon, of which 82 reviewers have given the film 4 out of 5 stars. Coincidentally (or not), many reviewers are using similarly crafted statements: “It’s time Americans woke up to the fact that the Communist Party USA has bamboozled us with a fake president” (26 reviewers); “Having just watched Dreams From My Real Father everything in this film makes sense and explains why Obama will go to any and all tricks to get re-elected” (22 reviewers); and “Joel Gilbert has uncovered the truth about Obama’s concealed past in Dreams From My Real Father” (16 reviewers).

*This article was reprinted by permission of its author from the Smirking Chimp, (which also houses NoC’s national blog).*



## Second secret video: Romney caught on camera favoring economic justice

### The leek: a satirical take

By Horace Heller Hedley, IV

In a stunning counterpoint to the recent video where Mitt Romney describes 47 percent of Americans as irresponsible and feeling entitled to government handouts, a second video has emerged showing the candidate expressing very different views. The second video, recorded secretly at a gathering of low-income women at a community center in an undisclosed city, shows Romney expressing empathy for his low-income guests, even raising questions of economic justice.

This gathering, until now completely unknown to the media, contrasted sharply with the \$50,000-a-plate fundraiser at the home of hedge fund manager Marc Leder, where the first video was taken. The setting for the newly-released video appears to be a church basement or similar venue, and guests can be seen serving themselves what appears to be casserole and sitting at folding tables covered with butcher paper.

Throughout much of the event, Romney offers friendly advice to the guests, many of whom seem eager to receive counsel from such a prominent business figure. When one young woman explains her difficulty paying rent on her waitress pay, Romney suggests that she start her own business. When the woman asks where she might get the start-up money, he suggests that she ask her parents for a loan. When she responds that her father died in a car accident and her mother is disabled and dependent upon her, Romney replies,

“The opportunity is out there, if you want it enough. Just keeping knocking on doors, it will happen for you!” The woman then playfully asks Romney for a loan, and he chuckles, “That’s the spirit!” then takes the next question.

The most controversial moment in the video involved an exchange between Mr. Romney and Ms. Gloria Smedley, who identifies herself as a single mother of two children. Mr. Romney listens patiently and with apparent empathy as she describes her situation:

“Governor Romney, every morning I’m up at 5:30, catch the bus, go into my job at the school cafeteria. Then at 3:00 in the afternoon I catch the bus home, make dinner for my girls and my mom, head out to my other job at the hospital, come home, help with homework, and put the girls to bed. Now I’m not complaining, but I’ve got a bad back, and I’ve been getting a little short of breath, and I don’t have health insurance, so I’m afraid to get it checked out in case they find something. I’m not saying it’s easy. But here is what really bothers me. Working two jobs like I do, I still don’t make enough money to pay any Federal income tax! I feel like I’m just not taking personal responsibility for my life, not pitching in one nickel. If I weren’t so exhausted and on pain medication, I couldn’t sleep at night!”

Romney seems touched, his voice soothing in reply.

“Now, Gloria, you need to understand...you *do* pay Federal tax. Not income tax, but the payroll tax that is deducted from your paychecks. So you might be paying about 11 percent of

your income to the Federal government, and that is nearly the same percentage that I pay! So you do contribute, and every little bit helps!”

He continues, “Sometimes things are tough—they just don’t seem fair. Now get that shortness of breath checked out, Gloria. If you lived in Massachusetts, you’d be covered, and no worries about pre-existing conditions. We took care of that.”

#### Conservative wonks react

Reaction to Romney’s “Gloria moment” from conservative commentators was swift and merciless.

“Fellow Republicans, we have been duped,” fumed Rush Limbaugh.

“Hoodwinked. Conned. Played for chumps. He talks a good game in front of hedge fund managers. But just put him in a church basement, get a little tuna surprise and Jello in him, and suddenly he is running for pastor-in-chief. We see it all now. Mr. Taxachusetts health care mandate wants to create the ‘fair’ nanny state that rescues poor Gloria from her bad back.”

Since the release of the video, the Romney campaign has been on the defensive. After initially claiming the film was a hoax created

by the Obama campaign, more recently the Romney team has been walking back their candidate’s statements. “The charge that Mr. Romney believes in economic justice is absurd,” said Stuart Stevens, top strategist for the Romney campaign. “He is deeply ashamed of the universal health care system that he created in Massachusetts. After all, have you ever heard him mention it on the campaign trail?”



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# Facebook, cont.

*Continued from page 1*

manner that sought common ground and compromise; likewise, had Michael published his ruminations in an edited publication, whether print or online, my initial response, and any subsequent responses between us, would have benefited from the calming influences of a) knowing we were writing (in some cases) for posterity; b) the expansiveness of the space available to make our points; and c) the judicious hand of an experienced editor.

Facebook “discussions,” on the other hand, offer none of these characteristics or possibilities. Michael observed irony in my initial response to his post, but after a couple of days’ reflection, I apprehended a more significant irony: we were arguing about social divisions, meaningless loyalties, and the “us versus them” mentality *through a medium* that itself is socially divisive, that demands the identification of “us” and “them,” and that is entirely structured on loyalties that more often than not are, under scrutiny, meaningless. This structure demands that its participants pick sides: you either belong to a group or you don’t, you either “like” a post or you don’t, and comments on posts are most often either banal confirmations of the post’s essential rightness, or, in the case of disagreement, outright antagonisms.

Facebook currently claims to have more than 950 million users, which is about one-seventh of the world’s population. That’s an impressive number, and represents around as big an “us” as Hinduism, Roman Catholicism, and the country of India. But while our memberships in the Facebook community grant us affiliation with one of every seven people in the world, they

## Public sphere, cont.

*Continued from page 1*

appearance is the push for voter identification laws that would disenfranchise the homeless, the poor, the elderly, and certain segments of the African-American and Latino communities. This campaign from the Right aims to push certain citizens out of the conversation about the future of our country.

But what about those who are living even deeper in the shadows, those whose who are being coerced and enslaved? Those who sometimes have no rights as citizens? Those who are entrapped when they are young and are now locked into the shadow economy of human trafficking?

### The ethics of seeing

Scholar Kimberley Curtis would answer those questions this way: we have the responsibility to see what is present, to be open to lives that are radically—and sometimes tragically—different from our own. If we don’t have first-person experience with those lives, then we have to practice imagining the conditions of others’ lives so we can help make space for them in the public world.

Imagining others’ lives is a tricky experiment. First, it requires an awareness of the fact that, at bottom, I can’t really know another’s experience. I can observe it, think it through based on my own values and philosophies, but in the final analysis, it is out of my reach. This is, I believe, why Arendt asserts that the common public world has to be consciously built—there is no automatic bond of understanding between members of a society. Even in the private sphere, the sense of a shared family experience is constructed from values habitually repeated and acted out.

Second, imaging the lives of those who are relegated to the shadows leads to a temptation—the temptation to see those individuals as simply “voiceless victims.” And, to see oneself as their representative in the public sphere. As the cliché goes, the righteous are called to be a voice for the oppressed. While this type of advocacy is sometimes necessary, it ignores that fact that we have created

“This series on human trafficking, as well as my earlier articles on the femicide in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, have been an attempt to envision lives swallowed up by shadow economies.” Beth Connors-Manke

necessarily exclude affiliation with the remaining six; you are either “on” Facebook or you are not, and those who aren’t—“them,” in short—often belong to populations already marginalized by money and class, such as the billions worldwide who lack an internet connection, access to a computer, or perhaps even electricity. So while the Facebook community rivals the world’s major religions and most populous countries in sheer size, it is much more exclusive: this one-seventh is the top one-seventh, and even as the membership continues to grow, the exclusivity will remain.

Now, of this 950 million-member community I claim “friendship” with a little more than 100, while Michael, a much more sociable person than myself, is friends with more than 800. Since I worry about too much of my personal information becoming public and used for nefarious purposes, I block access to my page for all but my friends; although I barely know at least half of my circle (several I’ve never even met), this is my very own “us” that Facebook has provided for; *I* have become *we*, and *we* are not *them*. I do wish my *we* were bigger, perhaps as big as Michael’s, but I suppose I can’t blame Facebook for that.

### Ephemera

I don’t know if any of my circle read my exchange with Michael on Chomsky and sports, but at least two of his circle did. I know about the first because she “liked” two of my replies with the thumbs-up symbol reserved for that purpose. But not enough, evidently, to want to expand her own circle of friends to include me, since no friend

invitation appeared; I of course didn’t invite her into my circle based only on a pair of “likes.” I wouldn’t want to appear desperate, after all. So she remained Michael’s friend, and not mine, though I appreciated her support, all the more for its slightly transgressive nature—she had, after all, crossed enemy lines.

On the other hand, the second person, also a member of Michael’s “us,” inserted himself into the discussion with a spurious one-liner that I answered in kind. What else was there to do? He was an interloper, and had to be dealt with. In fairness, he had rushed in to defend his own, perhaps without having read and understood the position he was attacking. Of course Facebook discourages its members from reading overmuch; in order to wade through my long first comment he would have had to click the “See more” link, for Facebook, perhaps assuming that anything worth saying can be said in one or two sentences, truncates all comments beyond the first 420 characters, or about two or three lines of text. The “See more” link functions as an admonishment: “fine,” it seems to say, “if someone really wants to read all that crap you wrote, they can, but *try* and keep it brief next time.” On the other hand, spurious one-liners fit the form very well.

My complaint here is precisely that which used to be leveled at email, but in comparison with Facebook, and certainly with Twitter, the old-fashioned email seems capacious, and even quaint in its insistence on greetings, closings and paragraph divisions, all holdovers from the printed letter and memorandum. A too-long email might elicit an exasperated sigh from its recipient, who

### Freeing labor

So, needless to say, writing about human trafficking has been a blow to many of the ideas I hold dear, many of the beliefs to which I desperately want to cleave. Unfortunately, talking to lawyers about anti-trafficking laws, listening to police officers talk about protocols, attending presentations about buying fair trade chocolate—none of these have given me much hope for the victims of human trafficking. I don’t see hope there because few of these approaches make more room for trafficking victims in the public sphere. They are still in the shadows; we’re just trying to make the shadows less dark, less harsh. They are still “victims without voices.” We’re still putting band-aids on structural problems in our economy and in our political sphere.

I have seen one proposal that seeks to shift the rules of the game. And while I cannot speak to the technical legal aspects of law professor James Gray Pope’s proposal, I do see it as a move toward allowing trafficked laborers a place in the public sphere.

In “A Free Labor Approach to Human Trafficking,” Pope argues that laws and interventions solely focused on prohibiting human trafficking have several weaknesses. First, they oversimplify the situation by making it a moral equation: evil traffickers exploit pathetic, weak victims. In this equation, the blame falls on the middleman, not on the companies that use, and profit from, labor trafficking. It also presumes victims have no power or agency.

Second, prosecuting anti-trafficking cases requires lots of energy and resources from governmental agencies and ancillary organizations. Prosecution of trafficking cases at times also exposes immigrant victims to the dangers of detention and deportation.

Finally, the prohibition approach does not insure that freed individuals will have access to non-servile jobs. Without that option, they are back to square one.

A complement to prohibition laws would be a free labor approach, which, in brief, would give workers more

might only skim its contents, but at least it’s all *there*.

Email demands a level of familiarity and accountability that Facebook does not. In order to send an email, the sender must have been given the recipient’s address, and be comfortable revealing his/her own; the exchange of email addresses is an act of trust. But interactions on Facebook require no such trust, merely the loosest of associations, meaning that anyone can say nearly anything to anyone else with little fear of repercussion. And even if you do cross a boundary, the ever-churning news feed will consign the offending comment to obscurity in no time, or you can simply delete it yourself. Facebook claims it creates accountability by requiring real names from its members, but it undercuts that claim by providing the means and opportunity to shirk responsibility whenever one likes. Why bother drafting carefully reasoned posts, when a bit of snark or a giggly “So true!” will do? On Facebook, it’s all ephemera.

All of these problems are compounded by Facebook’s still-increasing ubiquity. It seems that not only do we accept the discursive parameters the service imposes upon us, but we can’t seem to get enough of it. I hope some of this is novelty, a fad that will fade away as people discover that they want more—that they have more to say to each other than just sharing the latest “meme,” or tagging each other in vacation photo sets. Or maybe it will simply be displaced by the next big thing, which might be better, or might be even worse. In the meantime, it seems more important than ever to maintain those spaces that provide alternatives to the Facebook model.

power to leave enslavers and find other employers. “The free labor system operates” writes Pope, “as a nemesis to slavery and involuntary servitude. By exercising their Thirteenth Amendment right to change employers, workers exert the ‘power below’ necessary to give employers the ‘incentive above’ to avoid slavery and servitude. The right at issue is formulated positively as ‘the right to change employers,’ not negatively, as ‘the right to be free from involuntary servitude.’”

Pope believes a free labor approach has several strengths. It focuses on workers’ rights, not on prosecuting the bad guy, first. It emphasizes worker self-activity, meaning workers’ own organized efforts, rather than requires law enforcement resources. It attends to the creation of alternatives to slave work, by empowering workers to build their own companies, organizations, or affiliations. To support his thesis, Pope cites examples of quarry workers in India, the Domestic Workers United (DWU) in the U.S., and tomato-pickers in Immokalee, Fla.

### A tall order

My intention in discussing the Pope’s free labor approach is not to debate the intricacies of labor law; rather, I want to point out that there is more than one way to fight human trafficking. The way we choose to fight enslavement depends heavily on our willingness to allow the marginalized to take their own action. We have to change the ground rules so they have power in the public sphere.

This is a tall order because all workers, trafficked or not, are in precarious waters right now. With the recession grinding on and with the gleeful architects of austerity measures chanting their refrains about “the new normal,” too many laborers are watching their protections and powers fall away. If I may add one more thing I know to be true, it is this: exploitative labor conditions tend to spread, like the invasive kudzu, to everything around them—choking out what was once healthy and thriving and leaving only a failing system.



# Opinion

## Pudd’nhead Hank

By Marcus Flores

Theoretically, extreme partisanship presupposes a thorough understanding of one’s own party. In reality, it is often an indicator of the opposite—particularly for celebrities who generally forget that fame does not beget wisdom.

Hank Williams Jr. is loose again, scattering falsehoods like a Texas tornado. He has mislabeled President Barack Obama a Muslim who does not celebrate the pastoral values of rural Americans—fishing, hunting, and cowboys. (How conveniently he forgets that Romney—an Ivy League businessman with a blemished NRA record—is not exactly the figure one would expect to see plowing a field.) But Williams did not stop there, and in fact went on to defame liberals and “queer guitar pickers.” His peroration was as grand as it was pathetic: “Obama loves guns and we hate him.”

Oddly, this mantle of social conservatism abruptly vanishes in one of Williams’s more popular tunes, “Family Tradition,” an ode to the habits of a drinker and smoker (and according to popular refrain, not just of tobacco). The singer takes pride in his bullish defiance of social convention while acknowledging the weight of his lineage. It is, really, a tragic departure from the father, Hank Sr., who is to country music what Marcus Aurelius was to Rome. Yet unlike the emperor, Hank Sr. knew nothing of temperance and was slain young by an addiction to the poetic agonies—namely booze, substance, and women—that also left him largely apolitical.

Inspiration stems from personal conflict or social commentary, and country music cannot ignore the landscape of Hard Times: debt mounts to perilously new heights, a record number of citizens have filed for food stamps, and the Middle East is alight with anti-American sentiment. Despite the turbulent sailing, Americans remain glued to Glee and can always exchange small talk about trivial hassles.

Responding to the disjunction between American distress and American superficiality, Toby Keith, country music’s own Uncle Sam, satirizes nearly every American foible in his recent “American Ride”:

“Plasma gettin’ bigger, Jesus gettin’ smaller. Spill a cup of coffee, make a million dollars. Customs caught a thug with an aerosol can. If the shoe don’t fit, the fir’s gonna hit the shan.”

### Street surgery, cont.

*Continued from page 1*

traffic study reached similar conclusions. Conversion to two-way streets, the report concluded, would lead to “higher vehicle emission levels (air pollution)...as a result of the increased congestion.”

Unlike the two-way proposals under study, however, the CfCS plan creatively offsets any potential carbon emissions gains. Its reliance on one-way streets, which move traffic more efficiently through space than two-way roadways, provides an immediate cut in projected emissions. In addition, our Emissions Reading Group comrades have argued that Lexington might feasibly experience a net decrease in carbon emissions. Between those who refuse to drive on a single lane of downtown track, and those who transition into public and alternate forms of transportation, our Emissions team projects Fayette carbon emissions to decrease. Their ideas, admittedly, are crude and in need of refinement and further theorization, but initial evidence suggests that less cars on the road generally means less climate destabilizing pollution, particularly if bolstered by a robust and diverse public transportation system of peds, bikes and busses.

#### Stimulate calorie-burning traffic

In addition to mitigating the tonnage of Fayette County carbon released into the air, the CfCS plan also endorses alternate modes of transportation that

Keith’s lyrics do not fall to one side of the political spectrum, but rather capture a meaningful medley of topics illustrative of our present: at one point, the video shows the American Gothic painting with a FARM FORECLOSURE sign.

If you have heard about Toby Keith before, it might be due to a 2003 incident when Natalie Maines of the Dixie Chicks, apparently unaware of her domestic fan base, announced to a London audience that she was “ashamed” of President Bush’s Texas heritage. Keith publicly denounced the statement as unbecoming of country music singers. It seems reasonable that he was, in the shadow of September 11, defending the office of the President rather than Bush’s politics (Keith is a long time Democrat). But reason dissolved into quite a nasty feud, and if anything, Keith only got more patriotic.

Patriotism—even the occasionally goofy variety Keith employs—is one thing, but defamation of character and fountainous ejections of vitriol are quite another. So aside from hypocrisy, what makes the proclamations of Hank Williams Jr. so despicable is his blind belief that anything country is conservative. His charisma charms his fans who roar in agreement, ignorant of the Southern Democrats and Scalawags whose historical influence on the region can hardly be dismissed. Moreover, he is an outrage to the writ of southern hospitality by letting homosexuals and democrats know they are not welcome to enjoy his music or enjoy his lifestyle. He is, in other words, a turnip that has fallen from the wagon into a puddle of bigotry and ignorance.

As a conservative (with a lowercase “c”), I cannot pretend to support President Obama’s fiscal policies. Still, I prefer attacking ideas to people, and do so with measured tones aimed at mutual exchange. And as a rule, I turn my head and walk away at the first mention of Nazis in a discussion. (Hank Williams Jr. lost his Monday Night Football gig for an Obama/Hitler comparison.)

By manipulating his masses, Williams Jr. only ensures that popular political discourse will remain an ancient Athenian exercise in which the loudest and wittiest wins. In that clime, words inter reason and lure fans to a fictional world where the hive mind prevails. The only greater shame is that Williams drags country music there, too.

promote healthy living. A singular reliance upon personal and commercial automobile traffic--important modes of transportation--has contributed to our inactive and unhealthy lifestyles. We estimate that fully one-half or more of Main, Vine and Short will be given over to more efficient carbon-burning (bus) and calorie-burning (walking, riding) forms of public transportation.

Ideally, the realigned streets shall provide an entryway for a county-wide commitment to bike paths and bus routes that connect our neighborhoods and commercial centers. Lexington’s suburban grid, which sits atop the city’s eighteenth-century wagon-and-spoke system, is ideally suited for bike and bus travel. By creating a multi-modal downtown transportation grid that encourages walking and biking, the city will provide a centerpiece to which future transportation developments may seek to connect.

#### Transportation economics

Carbon-emitting based traffic solutions also require significant amounts of capital to construct, operate and repair roads and garages. Consider Ninth District councilmember Jay McCord, Lexington’s most bike-friendly councilmember, whose website boasts his efforts generating \$2.5 million in funding for a variety of biking and walking trails at neighborhood parks located throughout the county. The funding, while significant and evidence of McCord’s clear commitment to healthy activity, nevertheless pales in comparison to the \$55

## District 1 council race

*Editor’s note: As we did last election, NoC offered 500 words of space to each of the candidates for the District One seat: incumbent Chris Ford and challenger Marty Clifford. Our preference was that the candidates submit a constituent letter of support. Our goal was to allow two voters to frame thoughtful public arguments for their candidates, which is something that we feel is often left out of elections. NoC received no response from Marty Clifford’s campaign. Below is a letter of support for Chris Ford written by First District resident Thomas Tolliver.*

When I moved into my house on East Third Street in 1994, the East End neighborhood was in decline. A functionally obsolete public housing complex gave the neighborhood a bad image. The decrepit and long-closed Lyric Theatre at the neighborhood’s gateway intersection didn’t help. But the East End, like the rest of downtown Lexington, has come a long way since I bought my house 18 years ago. The obsolete housing development is gone, the resurrected Lyric has transformed that gateway intersection and a neighborhood association is in place working to usher in even more improvements.

Lots of people share credit for the turnaround the East End has experienced, and I won’t begin to name names. But I will say that the East End has benefited greatly by having strong representatives on the Urban County Council beginning with Andrea James and continuing with Chris Ford. Because there is work yet to be done, I think it is imperative that we continue to have a strong and outspoken representative on the council and for that reason, I am supporting Chris Ford in his re-election bid.



million in local, state and federal funds he directed into Lexington road projects. When even the most ardent political supporter of bike-use operates at a 20-1 funding disadvantage, it should be a sign that costs are out of control.

One chief reason for high automotive costs is that construction and maintenance of roads and parking structures compels cities to make significant long-term financial commitments. Discussions of Rupp Arena’s expansion, for example, have often been accompanied by the corollary need for tens of millions of dollars to create the parking capacity (i.e., a parking garage) necessary to store the increased amounts of cars that the rehabbed arena expects to attract. Likewise, roadways are no cheap propositions, and more traffic means more maintenance costs. The CfCS structural attention to public transportation should be viewed as an economic win for the city. By mitigating car-traffic, our design reduces the amount and costs associated with road repairs.

Meanwhile, costs for bike and pedestrian thoroughfares are cheap by comparison, and they require less maintenance. A group of active biking citizens, for example, recently installed four miles of mountain bike trails at Veteran’s Park for a cost of \$30,000.

For those keeping tabs, four miles is near the distance from downtown to Zandale Center, traveling south on Limestone/Nicholasville Road—and just about the average distance of most carbon-burning car trips.

While I fully recognize that the First District extends well beyond the East End, it is Chris Ford’s track record for getting things done in the East End that earns my support. Most notably, Chris has led the effort to get the Charles Young Center, a popular city-owned community center closed since 2008, reopened and functioning. In large part because of Chris Ford’s diligent efforts, the center has been updated and will soon be ready for new tenants, each of whom will contribute to the East End transformation.

Chris also is on the frontlines of other projects critical to the East End and regularly attends our neighborhood association meetings, as I’m sure he does in other neighborhoods in his district. In fact, I’ve seen Chris at so many meetings and functions that I’ve remarked to him “When do you sleep?”

In the name of full disclosure, let me say that I have not agreed with every vote Chris has cast in his almost two years on the council. The council’s recent decision to ban certain types of fireworks is one such example. In that case, I think the council, Chris included, caved in to a very vocal minority, much to the detriment of the rest of us. Therefore, I don’t hold up Chris Ford as being perfect. I do, however, believe he is best suited to keep alive the turnaround we’ve been experiencing in the East End.

In no way do I mean to disparage Chris’ opponent, Marty Clifford. I consider Marty a friend and, like myself, he’s a strong advocate for his North Limestone neighborhood. However, I believe that Chris Ford is the better candidate to send to City Hall to represent the East End and indeed, the entire First District.

*Thomas Tolliver*

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I’m not from here

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Letters to the editor

Slavery is real

We just wanted to send a quick “thanks” for the articles that you’ve written regarding both sex and labor trafficking. They are very bold. Ultimately, we made the decision to share them with our organization’s audience and we look forward to any future news that you may publish on the issue. It is undoubtedly a worthy cause and your work to help spread the word is highly appreciated.

In the interest of keeping you informed on the local organizations that are working in the fight for freedom, we’d like to introduce ourselves as well. We are Slavery Is Real, a recent non-profit organization developed in Lexington, KY that seeks to raise awareness and take action against modern slavery. We enjoy working closely with many local individuals and organizations that share our interests as well, and we’d love to keep up-to-date on your work. We’ll leave some links below. Check them out when you get a chance.

Thank you,  
*The Team at Slavery Is Real*  
*SlaveryIsReal.org*

Sometimes?!

“I still generally obey traffic signals” (“The responsible cyclist,” September 2012)?? Never mind that IT IS THE LAW. Please read pages 39 and 40 of the

Kentucky Driver Manual. If you can’t “obey the instructions of official traffic control signals and signs,” you really need to hang up your helmet.

*Christina, posted online*

Sell high, buy low

Have you seen the chain restaurants the Webbs are touting for Victorian Square (“Have you been downtown,” September 2012)? I don’t know if Olive Garden is involved, but not much different. I have to give it to the Webbs, though. They have the game down: sell high, wait for collapse, buy low. Repeat. Of course, the repeat is because we let them do it. Festival Market, Centre Pitt, and now Victorian Square. Sherman did less damage to Georgia. (OK. Over the top there.)

*Joe Anthony, north Lexington*

Class warfare

Dear Editor,

Mitt Romney says President Obama wants to wage Class Warfare. So I take it that Romney thinks Class Warfare is wrong. So how does he justify the Class Genocide that has been waged by the wealthy for the last 30 years?

What Class Genocide you might ask? The one that has seen the wealthiest 20% share of the wealth rise from 75% in the 1980’s to over 88% today.

Their 13% increase was the same loss of wealth the poor and middle class suffered over the same period. There’s really not that much left for the rest of us under a Romney/Ryan presidency is there? Especially if the Republicans gain control of Congress as well. Romney/Ryan want to lower the taxes still further on the wealthiest. As if paying 13 or 14% on a \$20,000,000 in income is too much to ask.

Mister Romney, it’s not envy or jealousy we feel. It is disgust...plain and simple disgust.

*Charles A. Bowsher, Southbend Drive, Lexington*

Epling’s magic

I love seeing this cartoonist in the paper. His work reminds me of another famous cartoonist, but I can’t recall who at the moment. The articles in the paper are most poignant to the real concerns of our area... and Epling’s illustrations really do add a bit of spice to the very well written articles. Keep them coming!

*Margaret, posted online*

River reading

I’ve read all your river and creek stuff, and have kept copies of the papers. Well, I’m a direct descendant of both John Findley, my seventh-great-grandfather, and also Ebenezer



Hiram Steadman. Both on my mother’s father’s side of the family, but the two guys were not related. Steadman, of course, was generations later.. Are you familiar with the book Bluegrass Craftsmen, originally published by U of K press, 1959?

*Gerald Parker, posted online*

Wes Houp responds,

Great, Gerald! Findley is one of my characters from the period! How cool to talk to a descendant. I have not heard of that book, but it sounds really good. I’ll definitely check it out.



*Brötzmann blows liquid. Photo by Captain Commanokers.*