North of Center

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 17, 2009 | FREE | TAKE HOME AND READ | VOLUME I, ISSUE 3

The Battle of Tates Creek

Residents seemingly impervious to need for safe pedestrian thoroughfare

North of Center News Bureau

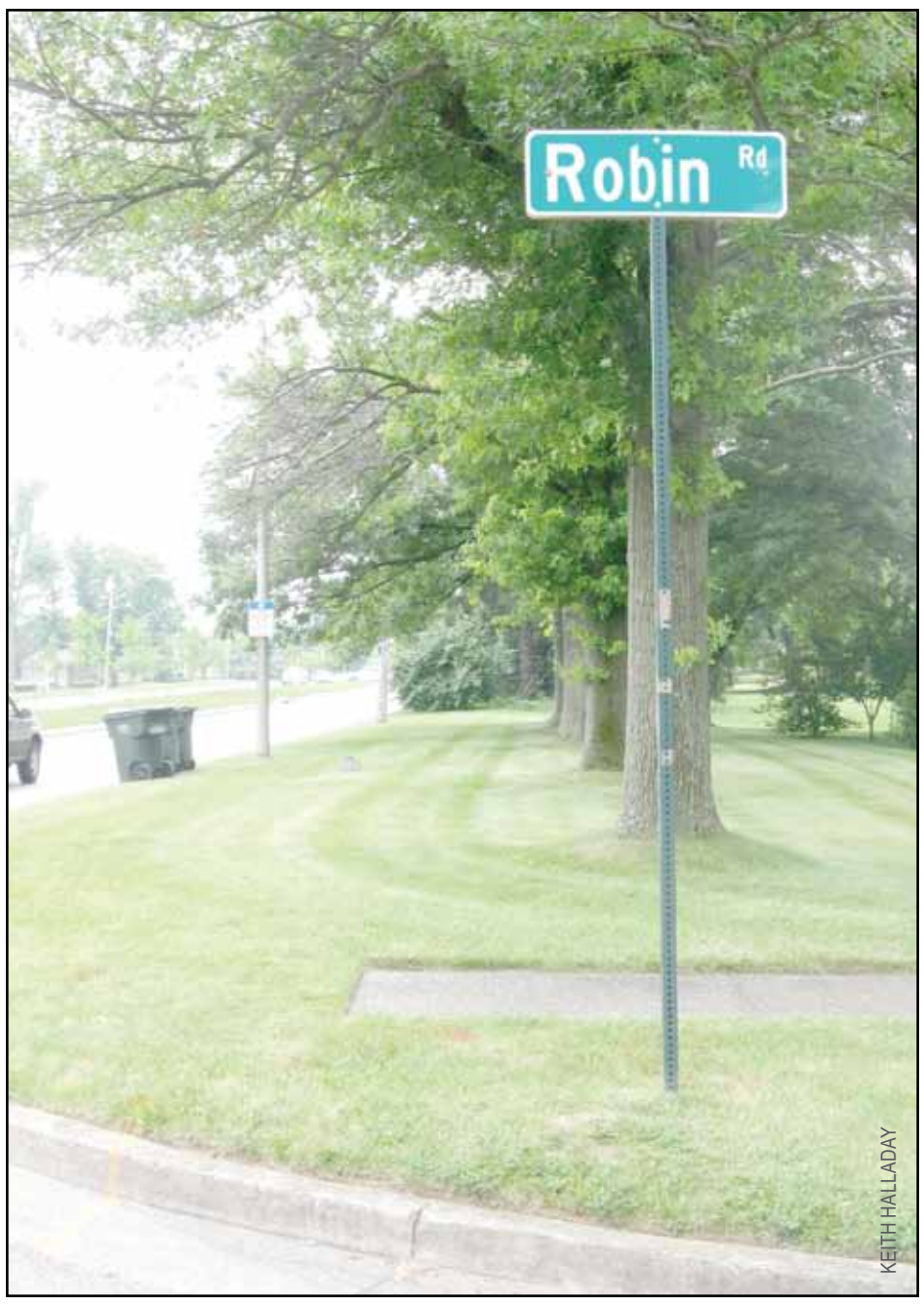
Friday, June 12, 2009, 11:54 p.m.

Ever vigilant, but often late, this reporter hustled out to the Tates Creek "Walk-in for Sidewalks" in the early evening on Wednesday, June 10. At issue: a city project to install sidewalks on Tates Creek Road between Lakewood Drive and New Circle Road. Some residents along Tates Creek have been fighting the sidewalks, going as far as hiring an attorney to represent their interests.

I had stumbled upon the call for the walk-in in the comment section below a June 9 Herald-Leader story about the controversy. "Hutsman" posted this summons: "Walk-in for Sidewalks! What? Walk-in for Sidewalks! Meet at the BP on Tates Creek Landsdowne at 6 PM---We walk down Tates Creek to Alumni to show support for the NEEDED Sidewalks. Strollers and Joggers are welcome."

Not fleet enough of foot, this reporter and her sidekick missed the main crush of 60-70 people who turned out to support pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly streets. There were a few stragglers (walkers and news cameramen alike) along the route when we arrived. These stragglers were heard to chant "We are walking on Tates Creek, We are walking on Tates Creek, Tates! Creek! Tates! Creek!" They threw their arms into what seemed to be the letters "T" and "C." For their walking efforts, they received one affable honk and wave. Later, another driver waved while slowing her car. It could not be determined if this was a congenial or aggressive act.

Some angered residents along Tates Creek proclaim with their yard signs: "Keep Tates Creek Green" and "No Impervious Sidewalks." Now, this rhetorical tactic is creative, if flawed. "Green" is the thing to tout these days, so those who oppose the sidewalks have their fingers on the pulse of the nation. Except that being "green" isn't about large lawns requiring riding movers and regular doses of chemical treatments to keep away dandelions—which is what this reporter presumes is necessary for the beautifully manicured lawns along Tates Creek.



Foot travelers at the corner of Tates Creek Avenue and Robin Road might find themselves puzzled at the sudden absence of sidewalks.

Being green *is* about reducing the footage of impervious surfaces such as roadways, parking lots, and driveways that exacerbate the issue of rainwater drainage (among other things). With this in mind, your humble reporter wondered if maybe these residents are on to something with the impervious surface concern.

Then I started paying close attention to the homes which had taken their stand against the sidewalks. Some—not all—had double-wide or especially meandering driveways. In other words, they already had a fair amount of impervious surface on their properties. With that blow, the rhetoric of the protest signs was completely deflated in this foot-traveler's view. The opponents of sidewalks seemed to have no real leg to stand on.

The Urban County Council agreed when it voted 11 to 4 on June 11 to approve the sidewalk project, which will receive a federal grant of about $800,oo0, with another $200,000 to be contributed by the city.

The real issue is a green one, just not the type the opponents have tried to project. It's about people treading more lightly in our city by walking and biking. After the Council vote, Doug Martin of District 10 said "The council supports sidewalks and connectivity. It's good for folks to get out of the house and walk to the store and bike to the Arboretum." There are several aspects of connectivity. The first, which Martin invokes, is about transportation and movement around the city.

Another aspect of connectivity—one that was eerily absent when this reporter trekked down Tates Creek on a perfectly balmy early summer evening—is social, the connection between neighbors and fellow city dwellers. I saw no one in front yards as I walked down Tates Creek. Perhaps it was simply coincidence that, during my hour and a half walk along the road, no homeowner was tending the flowers in his or her front yard, or watering a newly planted tree, or standing at the property line chatting with a neighbor. Surely this neighborhood has its own cohesion and sociality—a type that is invisible to passers-by. But what it felt like, as I walked past the signs protesting the sidewalks, was that big, empty houses were afraid of pedestrians.

There's nothing to fear from us, Tates Creek residents. We invite you into the fold.

Anatomy of a community garden

The second installment of building a basil economy

By Danny Mayer

It's 11 o'clock in the morning and I'm sitting on a stump in a shady spot of London Ferrell Community Garden. There's no other way to say it. I stink. Bad. For the past several weeks I have been trying to meet up for an interview with Ryan Koch, co-founder of Seedleaf, a non-profit created to help establish community gardens throughout Lexington. Although he'd never fess up to it, Ryan is a busy dude.

Thirty minutes earlier, in hopes of catching Ryan on my way home from a morning jog, I had detoured through the fenced-in, rectangular patch of urban community farmland that is London Ferrell. He was there—he's always there on Saturdays, it seems—and relatively available so I quickly proceeded home, grabbed my recorder for an interview, and made haste back to the half-acre patch of newly productive land, where Ryan was busy negotiating a collection of citizen community gardeners, student volunteers, bitter salad greens, weeds, some donated extra tomato plants, and now one seriously smelly amateur journalist/jogger.

Ryan wasn't always this busy. A little over a year ago I recall working several Saturday and Thursday mornings alone with him, both at London Ferrell and at a garden Seedleaf helped establish next to Al's Bar. (Produce from the Al's garden helped offset food costs at Stella's Kentucky Deli and Al's Bar—and to provide its customers with fresh veggies.) Ryan appreciated the morning conversation and at times even the semblance of work I offered. For my part I gained a wealth of knowledge about some of those important little gardening things like not compacting the soil. At that time, the work involved the two of us (when I showed up)--not so much lonely work as quiet work, filled occasionally with the sound of two laborers beginning to get to know each other as friends.

So as I sit on that stump now one year later waiting for Ryan and watching the brilliant energy of London Ferrell cycle from sun to soil to plant and on through the gaggle of people crisscrossing the garden beds, I am struck above all by Seedleaf's growth. Excepting kohlrabi, there seems to be

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Flowers in bloom around a teepee trellis at PeaceMeal garden, near Bluegrass Community and Technical College's Lesstown campus.

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

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***Please note**: the third installment of "Misadventures on someone else's land," Beth Connors-Manke's periodic update from the London Ferrell Community Garden, will appear in the next issue of North of Center.*

On resisting gentrification

Strategies for a community

By Brandon Absher

Gentrification is the process through which wealthier, more powerful people displace poorer, less powerful people and occupy and "develop" their homes and neighborhoods. Gentrification is occurring in many areas in Lexington, and it seems a likely future on the Northside. Here, I want to discuss the ways that ordinary people in Lexington can resist having their homes and neighborhoods taken from them.

One way is through legislation. Ordinary people in Lexington might begin to demand of the City Council and other legislative bodies that they enact laws that halt gentrification. Laws that lead to mixed income housing throughout Lexington would be a good first step. Rent-control laws, for example, would insure that poorer, less powerful residents are able to keep their homes. Thoughtful and creative zoning laws are also important – everyone should have easy access to groceries, jobs, schools, and political institutions.

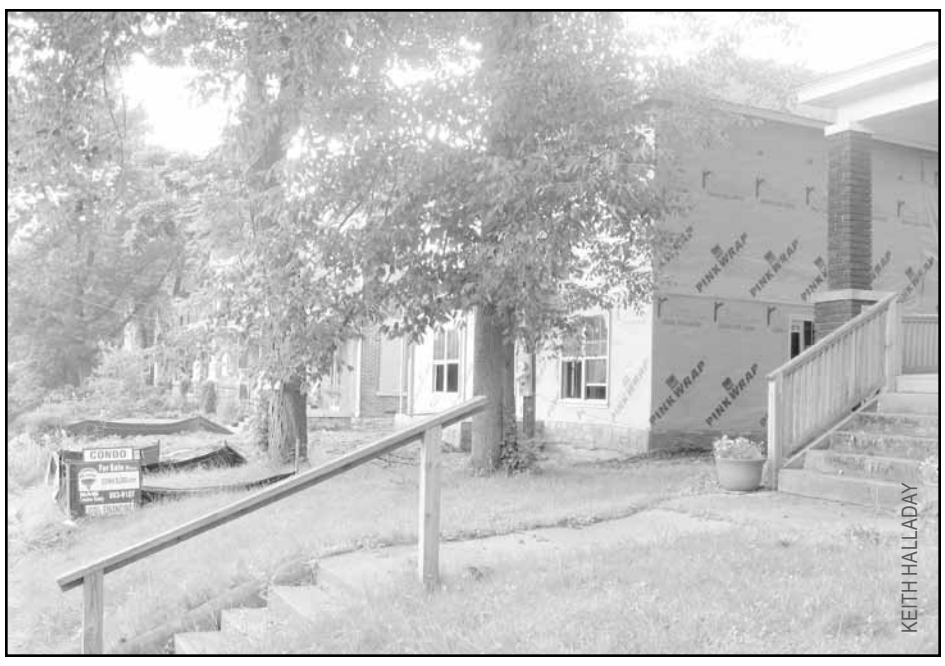
Legislation, however, is not necessarily the most effective or available means to resist gentrification.

Another important way to resist gentrification is by developing inclusive social support in one's neighborhood or local community. The first steps to gentrification will typically include the displacement of people deemed "socially undesirable" — the homeless, prostitutes, drug dealers, etc. Too often, neighbors feel besieged and disgusted by these people. Instead of treating them as genuine neighbors worthy of love and support, communities and neighborhoods are only too happy to see them cleared out.

A major step in resisting gentrification, then, might be to embrace and support people deemed "socially undesirable." A community or neighborhood could do this by developing support institutions such as free medical clinics, free addiction and drug treatment programs, free counseling and mental health facilities, food pantries and kitchens, homeless shelters, and other programs aimed at helping those who have been abused and rejected by our society.

Finally, gentrification occurs through a relatively gradual increase in property values and rents. As wealthier, more powerful people decide that they would like to live or own property in an area, the land becomes increasingly more valuable as a commodity. An important step, then, in resisting gentrification is resisting the temptation to treat one's home and one's neighborhood as a commodity. First of all, this means creating neighborhood solidarity. Collectively, the residents of a neighborhood must make a decision to take responsibility for the neighborhood and its stewardship. Secondly, this means putting yourself on the line in the fight to save your home and neighborhood and in support of your neighbors and their homes. When the bull-dozers come, stand in front of them. When the landlords kick people out, help them squat their homes.

Homeowners, do not sell. Do not move. Do not conform to the standards and laws of those who would steal your home. Remember: the legal concept of property was invented to protect their interests, not yours.



New condominuim construction on N. Martin Luther King Boulevard.

This is not an exhaustive list of all the manifold ways of resisting gentrification. There are countless ways that you can fight this process. The most important thing, however, is that you join with your neighbors and fight it. North Lexington is a beautiful place full of interesting and exceptional people. It would be a shame to allow that to be destroyed.

No love in Lex for local hip hop

By Troy Lyle

I remember the day I was first exposed to hip-hop like it was yesterday. The year was 1984 and I was about to make the enormous leap from elementary to high school. To say the least I was nervous. I heard horror stories all summer long about how upperclassmen treat 8th graders.

But my nerves quickly subsided as I waited for the school bus. Several older kids standing nearby were jamming a boombox and what was coming out was unlike anything I had ever heard. The song was "Stick 'Em" from The Fat Boys—a four minute temporal assault of mouth beats, turntable scratches and machine gun vocals.

I had all but forgotten about the above incident until last week when several of my coworkers and I debated the origins of hip-hop. It was during this very discussion that I recalled standing at the bus stop that summer morning with the boombox blaring. But that was 25 years ago and hip-hop had surely changed.

Wanting to know more, I decided to ask two of my coworkers, Kyle and Phillip, their thoughts on the subject. I knew they both were local hip-hop artists, having heard a track or two off their 9th mix tape – "Streets Under Siege (Vol. 9), The Swine Flu." I also knew they had a wealth of knowledge on the subject. What I didn't know was how hard these two worked to make a name for themselves.

Smitty and Phlip representing at the Dame.

Kyle Smith, a.k.a. Shitty Smitty, and Phillip Williams, a.k.a. Phlip Phlop, began rapping three years ago. What began as a love of music and a single track is now a record label – Partyhouse Produktions – with nine mix tapes and two full length albums to its credit. Their upcoming release, "Lyrical Botany," is due out in late July.

In addition to releasing 11 albums, hosting a myriad of mix tapes and promoting their label, the two also represent artists from Atlanta to Florida to Alabama. And if that's not enough to convince you of their street credentials, then consider this, they've opened for several of the industries larger players such as Nappy Roots, Killer Mike, Khujo Goodie of Goodie Mob and CunninLynguists.

If you are like me this is about the time you're asking yourself, how is it that I haven't heard anything about these two?, a question I posed to the both of them. I wanted to hear in their words, and their words alone, why they struggle for local exposure.

"Partyhouse Produktions has been up and running for three years now," said Smitty. "It's been tough to get any local exposure because venues and radio stations in Lexington aren't willing to take a risk on local hip-hop." Smitty elaborated by saying that local pubs and bars "don't think a profit can be made booking a hip-hop act." And that if a local venue were to "take a chance on hip-hop," all of the promotional responsibilities fall on the artist(s) to promote and in most cases sell tickets to their show.

Phlip says he understands why local venues place the majority of the publicity and promotion on the acts themselves, but points out that the playing field and promotional responsibilities aren't the same for all genres of music. "Other genres like rock get all the attention locally," he said. "And if a rock band books a show they are offered larger cuts of the door sales, and in some cases a percentage of the bar sales as well."

That never happens with hip-hop artists, Phlip said.

It's not just Lexington's bar and club owners turning their nose up at local hip-hop, it's local radio stations like 107.9 The Beat as well, said Smitty. "They want us to pay a lot of money to have our music put into the station's rotation," he said. "In some cases thousands of dollars." Phlip said they've approached local stations like 107.9 with their music but have received little in response. "It's not like we don't have a fan base," he said. "Our music is heard all over the world and our latest release is being played in more than 50 countries." Phlip added, "We have a lot of people in Lexington asking us why they don't here our music on the radio—all we can say is we've tried to get air time."

To make matters worse, if local radio stations and venues aren't enough for a hip-hop act to battle, there's the culture of Lexington as well, said Smitty. "The people who have control of what's being built and where and who plays where and when – the people with the money – they don't want a hip-hop scene," he said. "They associate all of hip-hop with the negativity that's often associated with rap as a whole."

"Were not about rap, hip-hop or any one specific genre," said Phlip. "I mean if you had to label our sound ... I'd call it smooth hip-hop. Or in other words, our sound, our approach to music, it's about not taking life for granted. It's about living in and appreciating the moment." Smitty echoed Phlip's sentiment. "Our songs touch

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Building a basil economy, part 2 (cont.)

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more of everything this year: more individual plots, more fruit trees, more volunteers, passersby, journalists.

On this late spring Saturday, London Ferrell hums in waves that my digital recorder just can't register, and I can't shake the feeling that this is one aspect of what an economy based in food might look like—and of what sorts of jobs, economic transactions, and human possibilities might arise through such an economy.

"I see gardening as a long, slow conversion for me," Ryan began between sips of coffee as he grabbed a stump next to me in the shade. "I was 18 and in a college lecture. A professor whose name I couldn't tell you—and I couldn't tell you about any of his lectures—read 'Mad Farmer Liberation Front,' that Wendell Berry poem. And he read it in the beginning of class and said 'that doesn't have anything to do with today's lecture. I just liked the poem.'" While remaining an intermittent fan of Berry's work, it wasn't until 2004 when he married Jodi that the two "committed to trying to do a garden whenever we could as one of our habits of marriage. I thought lettuce was hard to grow. In our first year, I don't know if we grew any lettuce, but we had a tomato. So we called it goal achieved for year one."

Before I could get around to asking Ryan how he saw his connection to gardening as an intimate "habit of marriage," a dog barked behind us in the old Episcopal Burial grounds located at the approximate east flank of London Ferrell. The two neighbors from Campsie who owned the dog began chatting with Ryan; meanwhile, my friend Andrew arrived, the first time I"d seen him since he returned from a two-week sojourn to western Canada and back. Before I noticed it, Ryan had slipped off to help out some other volunteers and neighbors, who asked questions, told stories and awaited directions as to what should be picked,what mulched, what turned under.

Oikos

Although I never recaptured that Right moment to follow up, Ryan's comments resonated with me. Two weeks earlier I sat in the kitchen of Sherry and Geoff Maddock discussing a range of topics that circled around the ins and outs of what I clumsily call "a basil economy" and they called "food systems." Through the course of our conversation, I asked Sherry about how she viewed her position as head of the North Martin Luther King Neighborhood Association (NMLKNA). Sherry explained that she viewed the neighborhood association as "as a civic unit for change. The capacity to work out change in our lives," she continued, "starts in our own households and then with who we live next to." Her position as NMLKNA head was simply a considered outgrowth of her everyday life.

Understood in this context, London Ferrell—which owes much of its rebirth as a productive space to the creative social energy of Sherry Maddock—seems like a logical next step. The plot sits less than two blocks from the Maddocks' house. Its redevelopment as a community agricultural space reflects the Maddocks' commitment to working out change alongside their neighbors.

Sherry is excited about the public process of working out new partnerships that merge and work collectively through collaboration at London Ferrell. Seedleaf helps set up the gardens, collects compostable materials from local eateries like Third Street Stuff to aid in soil replenishment, and generally organizes much of the agricultural, social, and volunteer activities that take place there; the MLKNA pitches in money secured through the city for composting structures to help out Seedleaf (and by extension London Ferrell); the Urban League, the County Extension Office, and UK's sustainable agriculture department help consult and offer startups; the fire department located next door tends a large plot to help feed its crew.

It doesn't end there. The produce not picked for free by neighborhood residents gets collected and sent out to nearby places that have a need for fresh produce. Last year excess produce went to the Lighthouse Ministry; it went to a WIC office a block away that has since been closed. It went to Kid's Cafe on Seventh Street and The Nest at Duncan Park. This of course was the excess produce. As Sherry noted, for the most part "[t]he food grown in the community garden left in hands we never saw." These hands included people from adjacent neighborhoods who took the produce and prepared meals for the homeless or for low income neighbors who needed the food. Add to that, Sherry finishes, the "individual gardening grown by people who were able to select the kind of things they wanted to grow [in their private plots] and supplement that with things at the garden."

The Maddocks understand these new systems and relationships built around the circulation of food and the communal reclaiming of public space as a form of economy. To be sure, it's a human scaled form of economy centered around cyclical periods of shared abundance, and this little resembles our corporate scaled economy that tends to reward us for hording wealth with even more wealth. But as Geoff reminded me, London Ferrell's economy more closely tracks the word's original meaning and usage. "There's not an accidental connection between household and economy," Geoff observed, "because the word oikos, which in Greek means household, is where we get the word economy....so when you talk about sustainability it has everything to do with economics and households."

Throughout my conversation with Geoff and Sherry, I recognized the mutual influence of Wendell Berry on the three of us. In fact, after Ryan jilted my filthy ass weeks later for the more overtly productive collection of volunteers sprinkling the area—leaving me quite literally and suddenly alone on a stump under Ferrell's shade—it didn't take a superhuman bit of journalistic ingenuity to see in Berry a response to my unasked question to Ryan: why gardening? Why a marriage of habit?

Berry has argued that since "the roots of the problems are private or personal," then necessarily "the roots of the solutions will be private or personal too." Berry speaks of different relationships that emanate from the home and into our immediate communities—presuming of course that by "home" and "immediate communities" we include all the resources that comprise a local community: our land and our water, our plants and our animals, our minds and our bodies. For many of us, gardening is a tangible act that necessarily asks of us to not only think about these different communities, but to view them as productive feeders of each other. It changes us by thinking of connecting our soil to water and rotting plant matter, our chickens to garden pest control, our healthy acts of fruit and vegetable production to healthy bodies. If you're gonna establish good marriage habits that start at the level of the household, you could do a lot worse than gardening.

"If you want to care for the earth more," Ryan observes before ditching me, "put a basil plant in a pot and watch how much you care about when it rains. That's been very real in my life. I really stress out after four dry days in a row. I never used to be that kind of guy. I'm irritable. I pray more. I've never prayed so much for rain. It's changing me; it's part of how gardening is converting me."

Imagination and Action

I recall being mildly surprised when Sherry told me that, as a producer of food, London Ferrell does little to effect the larger presence of hunger in the greater Lexington area—our most immediate neighbors. It "doesn't even make a dent in...the provision of local food," she says. It's too small; for it to have a tangible impact, London Ferrell would have to scale up its production, its volunteers, its space. All of these things have consequences of course—more labor, more dialogue about best use of the communal space, more places ready to receive and process the increased amount of food coming in. These things take time, Ferrell is a limited space, and meanwhile people are still hungry. Instead, Sherry talks about the garden's main function residing "at the level of the imagination...it begins to stimulate people's minds to possibilities."

A sampling of goods on offer at the Lexington Free Market.

I'm normally skeptical of these assertions because they tend to ride into the more politically passive realm of symbol. As in, that London Ferrell garden is a "symbol" of change in the community. However true that may be, I tend to add more value to even the smallest material changes in people's lives. Did anyone get fed because of the garden's existence? If so, for me that outweighs any symbolic meaning that, like money, we can't use to sustain ourselves for long. It's a little like Obama's message of "hope" in that way.

But I must admit, as important as those food routes may be for the nourishment of at least some North side residents, viewing its chief work as working "at the level of the imagination" makes a lot of sense. If taken correctly, London Ferrell is both model and challenge for action; Seedleaf is both an invitation to imagine gardens sprouting in most any place and a working pamphlet guiding us along through spring, summer, and fall plantings. One can already see people answering the call of Seadleaf and Ferrells' challenge of our imagination. Seedleaf is up from three to ten gardens this year; some of the gardeners tending plots last year took the knowledge learned from watching things develop at London Ferrell and moved on to other lots—some no doubt at home, some in a friend's yard, some at other community lots.

This year Ryan seems finally able to have a go at Seedleaf fulltime. He's secured a little city money that will pay him to scale up his compost retrieval from area restaurants who would otherwise dispose of it. The increased amount of decomposing vegetable matter will ultimately overwhelm London Ferrell, so he will soon bring his scraps out to PeaceMeal Gardens, a twenty acre patch of rolling hillside at the back of the Bluegrass Community and Technical College's (BCTC) Leestown campus that is being converted into a working suburban farm. Jessica Ballard, the farm manager at PeaceMeal, worked with her UK sustainable ag class to help Ryan develop good composting practices to more quickly and beneficially turn the scraps into usable compost and soil. Both Ryan and the sustainable ag class had their imaginations sparked by a visit paid by urban farmer and activist Will Allen. Some of Jessica's salary is provided by the Catholic Action Center, who in conjunction with Rebecca have plowed under an acre of soil to grow things that will feed into their food kitchens for the hungry who show at their Godsnet location. Another portion of Jessica's salary will be paid for through a market garden that will provide BCTC students a dearly needed dash of fresh produce in what is otherwise an educational food desert.

To paraphrase Sherry, there are a lot of imaginations being stoked here, a lot of new configurations of of power and productivity arising through these new food systems. Importantly, several people have done the hard work of translating the imagination into the realm of possibility and eventually actuality.

We need more of that.

Local hip hop (cont.)

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on every aspect of life – war, community, style, love, politics – we're all about positivism," he said. "It's tough for an upcoming artist, band or label to make a name for itself, but in a city like Lexington it's even harder and more expensive."

Smitty said he's considering moving to Atlanta, where there's a community already in place that's "supportive of upcoming artists." He pointed out that CunninLynguists started out in Lexington some years back, but moved to Atlanta to find a city that allowed its members and its music to grow. "I'm good friends with the members of CunninLynguists and many other artists in Atlanta," said Smitty. "They all tell me Atlanta is the place to be ... that the bars, clubs and radio stations in and around Atlanta are constantly promoting local artists." Smitty said CunninLynguists had a loyal following while based in Lexington, but reiterated. "They moved to Atlanta and now they're growing bigger than ever. That's no coincidence ... that's exposure ... that's a community supporting its artists."

I spoke earlier of my initial experience in hip-hop, when The Fat Boys "Stick 'Em" introduced me to a whole new world of music. Being a white kid born in Louisiana and reared in Virginia, I know I'm no authority on the subject of hip-hop, or on much of anything for that matter, but I do know this. Lexington has and continues to "stick 'em" when it comes to many of its own members within the community.

It's a shame that artists who began locally have to move hundreds of miles away to find the financial and emotional support needed to realize their dreams. If Lexington is going to be a city of the future, like our mayor and council members are constantly touting, than it's high time we as members of this community demand more from our citizens, whether they be bar owners, DJs or political representatives.

If you would like to learn more about Shitty Smitty, Phlip Phlop, or Partyhouse Produktions, visit www.myspace.com/partyhouseproduktions

Look out for their second full-length album, "Lyrical Botany," in late July, as well as solo albums from both artists later this year.

Film & Media

The same film three times differently

Contextual viewing, reality-framing and *Schindler's List*

By Michael Dean Benton

Since the publication of Christian Metz's 1975 essay "The Imaginary Signifier," it has become a cliché in film studies that the experience of watching a film in a darkened public theater encourages the "voyeur's gaze." In recent years, though, with the development of home theater technologies, watching a movie at home has become much more voyeuristic in that solitary viewers can simply watch a film without thoughts of others impeding on their experience. Furthermore, the individual viewer can control the presentation of the film through language settings, viewing modes, audio tweaking, and rewind/fast-forward functions. A public theater, on the other hand, constantly involves the individual viewer in a communal experience that finds them interacting with the narrative on the screen while simultaneously experiencing the reactions of their fellow filmgoers.

In a public theater you may think, why is someone laughing at this inappropriate moment? You may watch as someone flees the theater in horror, or wonder if anyone can see the tears streaming down your face as you recognize some hidden part of yourself in a cinematic moment. While the darkened public theater does encourage the viewer to easily slip into a dream-like state, it is a much more "restless" communal state than watching a DVD in the privacy of one's own home.

This is one of the reasons I value re-watching films in different contexts (public/private, entertainment/academia, play/work, present/future, time/space, etc.) because it forces me to interpret the film through different perspectives. It is a method for understanding the power of complex media texts to frame reality. By shifting the context of our viewing of a film we can push ourselves to deepen our understanding of the effects of a particular film and push ourselves to understand how those effects work to create a world for our minds.

In this, I am fortunate to be a teacher of film studies because new generations of film students challenge me to revisit my initial interpretations of films in light of their own responses and comments. In order to explore the importance of recognizing "contextual viewing" in our interpretation of media texts I will discuss three different viewing experiences of *Schindler's List* (USA: Steven Spielberg, 1993).

The first time I watched *Schindler's List* was during its second week of release at a crowded megaplex theater in Belleville, IL. The theater was sold out, people were sitting in the aisles, and the stench of movie food was overwhelming. I couldn't escape the sounds of munching and slurping. I was revolted by the spectacle of film-goers gorging themselves on mass-produced confections while watching starving, brutalized people on the screen. My thoughts returned to Richard Rubenstein's book *The Cunning of History: The Holocaust and the American Future* (1978) in which he made the argument that the holocaust, in its sheer organization, economy of effort, and application of technology towards the death of millions was a supreme expression of the 'modern' - of enlightenment reason and mass industrial know-how. In this context the repackaging of the horror of the Holocaust as a mass entertainment seemed to be yet another example of how everything becomes a product for consumption in modern society. Then, at the point in the film where a child hides in an outhouse toilet to escape the NAZIs' rounding up of Jews to take to the camps, I noticed an elderly couple in front of me sobbing while holding onto each other. The emotion of the couple forced me out of my critical distance and prompted me to engage with the film. As I left the theater something about the elderly couple made me want to learn more about the Holocaust survivors. What was their story and how did they survive? I wondered who they knew that had tragically been lost in the Holocaust.

The second time I watched Schindler's List was during the special showing of the film, free of commercial interruption, on television (February 26, 1997). The network NBC was showing it, with funding from the Ford company, in lieu of commercial interruptions. NBC's actions signaled that this was a cultural artifact that demanded to be shown uninterrupted and that it should not be sullied with the dirtiness of commercial concerns. (OK, those are my words, but that was the sentiment of the time, which should also cause us to pause and think about commercials and commercial TV in general.)

I was a master's student in the Popular Culture Department at Bowling Green State University (Ohio). A wonderful, nurturing, small environment of scholars seeking to glimpse outside the fishbowl, we gathered at a professor's house to watch the event and analyze the film as well as the cultural moment. We sat in a circle around the TV, lights on, and discussed all aspects of the film, the historical period and the significance of a large percentage of Americans tuning in that night to watch the film. This unique communal experience provided distance from the usual cinematic experience, yet at the same time it enhanced my engagement with the film. It forced me to think about the (re)presentation of the historical facts, to compare the film with other films/histories presented by

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Review: *FLOW: For Love of Water*

By A.G. Greebs

It's time to start worrying about water. Not just talking about water as something we're going to have to worry about in the next few decades, but now. Immediately.

We hear it said again and again that water is going to be this century's oil, a vital resource that causes wars and costs lives. And while most people take that at face value, it's difficult to say for sure what the metaphor means. The problem with water is that it's hard to get a grip on, so to speak. Especially for those of us who are living through an exceptionally wet spring in an area where it seems to rain, if not all the time, then certainly more than we'd like right now.

It's easy to see how water shortages can be a problem in sub-Saharan Africa, with its chronic droughts, or in Phoenix, AZ, (cause, you know, maybe it wasn't such a great idea to put the nation's fifth largest city in the middle of the desert). But aside from the chronic short falls in arid climates and major population centers, how is this going to affect the rest of us? For anyone wondering about the coming, nearly inevitable, global water crisis, filmmaker Irena Salina is here to help, in the form of her new documentary, *FLOW: For Love of Water*.

Don't be too put off by the unfortunate title. (Did they really need both an acronym and the definition of that acronym?) That is easily the most cumbersome thing about this film. FLOW itself is intelligent, moving and almost breathtakingly large in scope.

It isn't often that a documentary with such a broad focus can succeed as well as *FLOW* does. Salina and her crew pull together footage and interviews from dozens of stories relating to the global water crisis. They touch on everything from the jet fuel-contaminated drinking water in Southern California to the legal dispute over who owns the stream water in drought-ridden India. What ties all these stories together, other than the water itself, is this question: to what extent should vital natural resources be available for private profit? Who owns the rain is no longer a poetic question. It's a legal debate, and the answer is probably Nestle.

Across Bolivia, South Africa, India and the United States, Salina follows private corporations such as France's Suez (the largest water company in the world) and Germany's RWE (corporate overlord of our own Kentucky American), going into local communities to talk with grass roots leaders about how the current water policies are affecting their livelihood and environment. Juxtaposed with these local stories are interviews with experts in the field, professors, policy analysts, rabble-rousers and—easily the most chilling—corporate water executives.

None of which sounds tremendously original, I know. (Wait, private industry sometimes puts profits over public good? How shocking!) But the strength of *FLOW* comes from its multitude of brief narratives which put a face on a broad and complex tragedy. It may seem like comparing the levels of the pesticide Atrazine in the ground water in Iowa with the revived water harvesting techniques of Rajasthan could make for a pretty schizophrenic combination, but FLOW's persistent attention to individuals as well as issues makes the film almost hypnotically compelling.

Not all the stories end happily. Indeed most of the ones that would hit closest to home for an American have no conclusion at all. The Nestle bottling company has managed to tie up a citizen's lawsuit in the appellate process, allowing the corporation to keep pumping while reducing neighboring streams to bogs and mud flats. Bottled water, the most devious marketing con ever developed, is still almost entirely unregulated.

None of which sounds cheerful, or easy to watch. *FLOW* is, at times a profoundly uncomfortable movie. Wired magazine called it, "The scariest movie at Sundance." But to imply that is the overall tenor of the film does it a disservice.

FLOW is emphatically not one of those documentaries intended to scare the crap out of you and leave you feeling like you've been mugged. More than just a hit job on multinational corporations and the World Bank, it is a call to arms and a powerful allegory about the power of community organizing. Audience members are more likely to leave feeling empowered than terrified.

FLOW *will be playing at Natasha's Café, Sunday, June 21st, at 8pm. (But come at 6pm for dinner!) The screening is part of the Kaleidoscope Micro-Cinema series.*

Culture

Live music you need to know about

NoC's music staff breaks down the next two weeks

Thursday, June 18
M.A. Turner w/ Three Legged Race, Street Gnar
Lower 48, 401 West Main Street, 10 P.M. 21+

Warmer Milks were a real enigma. You either loved 'em or hated 'em, but either way you probably didn't understand 'em. Switching gears from prog-folk to Flipper-ish punk to noise to psychedelic boogie to power pop, to *x*, to *y*, to *z*, releasing a slew of handmade cassettes and CDRs that didn't sound like they were crafted on the same *planet* much less by *the same band*, cycling through no less than a dozen band members, their gigs either disastrous or sublime, very rarely in between—all this over the course of a very brief existence (five years, by my count).

M.A. Turner essentially *was* Warmer Milks, and when the whole thing finally careened out of his control entirely, he decided to stake his claim solo, jamming raw, splattery dirges on a battered electric and howling into a mic. The one-man-show predictably didn't last long, however, and now

Green Jelly.

Turner is accompanied by local artist R. Clint "Hot Dog" Colburn on percussion, pounding out a primal pulse to bear the brittle riffage, the whole thing very fragile and precarious, but quite beautiful. It's a new dawn, for sure. Opening up, Three Legged Race will craft some minimal melodic territory via all manner of hotwired electronics, and Street Gnar will bring some wicked dirty tremelo'd creep and thud. —*Trevor Tremaine*

Saturday, June 20
Taildragger w/ Dirty Church Revival
The Green Lantern, 497 W Third Street, 9 P.M. 21+

While much of the local original music scene in Lexington can be described as "alternative," whatever that means, Taildragger simply doesn't fit into that scheme. Taildragger just plays straight-ahead rock'n'roll, and it's some mighty bumptious rock'n'roll. Hearkening back to the original roots of the genre, Taildragger's music has a distinctly Southern vibe to it, drawing heavily on Texas and Delta Blues to inform its musical language. But don't get the idea that there is anything sleepy or laid-back about these guys. The guys in Taildragger are ferocious players.

If you are into powerful bass and guitar-driven rock bands that just make your jaw drop at the meaty licks and riffs, then this is the band for you. Originally formed from the remnants of Black Cat Bone and Nine Pound Hammer, Taildragger has seen a revolving cast of bassists and drummers over the years, as well as a number of guest artists (like Greg Martin of the Kentucky Headhunters) both live and in the studio. The one constant, however, is singer/guitarist Jon McGee. As a vocalist, the man positively wails. His guitar work ranges from crunchy rhythm to scorching slide to blistering leads. Sounds pretty hot, right? Well, it is. If you've had it with the quirky electronica, yipping and yelping, one-chord drone and screams, or just plain noise that you can hear so much of in Lexington, then you need to check out Taildragger. Prepare to rock out. —*John Clark*

Saturday, June 20
The N.E.C., Jovantaes Abby a Go Go
Al's Bar, 601 North Limestone, 9 P.M.

Watching little Jimmy Kirk kick out the jams while boosting his step-dad's car in the latest take on Trek reminded me of one of my pet Federation peeves: where's the rock? Britton, Klingon opera, Dixieland, for crying out loud – all have a place in the Fed. But pop? Never. What, no Buzzcocks fans in Starfleet? In beams the N.E.C. For this handsome Atlanta quartet, space is the place for rock and romance. A shoegaze haze blurs the garage grind: it's a sock hop on the edge of forever. The N.E.C. will blow your mind, break your heart, and shake your cake.

Surfing the boom tube with the N.E.C. will be hometown heroes, Jovontaes. They used to be Tight Leather before Spock quit and they replaced him with the Wookie. Grooving like a biker flick with a krautrock soundtrack, the J-boys have a good time flaming out with their raucous brand of space junk. First up on the launch pad will be Abby a Go Go. —*Bill Widener*

Wednesday, June 24
Green Jelly w/ All American Werewolves, Burning Hammer
The Boiler Room, 395 S Limestone, 9 P.M.

When I saw Green Jelly play at The Fishtank a few months ago, I didn't expect much: sure, they rocked when I was 10, but now they're just a pitiful, washed-up comedy-rock act, right? (The band's motto, after all, is "Green Jelly sucks," which leads one to wonder...) Well either I haven't changed much since "Three Little Pigs" dropped or Green Jelly is one of the hottest acts coming to Lexington in the coming weeks. (Both could be true.)

Jelly, pronounced "Jell-o" like the gelatin snack Kraft threatened to sue the band over, boasts a loyal legion of fans that flock to their shows like a secret guild of well-behaved headbangers. That's because Green Jelly's mixture of chunky riffs, heavy-metal guitars, and over-the-top vocals works so well, it's easy to forget that you're listening to songs about bears, The Flintstones, cereal, nursery rhymes and other absurdities. All the gaudiness wouldn't make a lick of difference if the band didn't actually bring the heat, and I'm here to testify that they really, truly do, and this gem of a Wednesday night show shouldn't be missed. —*Nick Kidd*

Wednesday, June 24
Sir Richard Bishop w/ Oaxacan, Sapat
The Swan Dive, 921 Swan Street, Louisville, 9 P.M.

I typically don't advocate leaving the city to check out live music, but this is a crucial gig. Sir Richard Bishop was one third of the infamous expectation-defying avant/punk/world/noise/improv/psych/prank trio Sun City Girls, and is one of the most far-out, soulful shredders on the planet. After a career spanning a quarter-century and God only knows *how* many records, he and brother/bassist Alan (alias "Uncle Jim") called it quits in 2007 after the passing of the inimitable Charles Gocher, the trickster-deity who served as the Girls' percussionist. Since then, Bishop has steadily increased his activity as a solo performer, cutting a couple discs for Drag City, and touring with Animal Collective (maybe you were one of the assholes talking over his set at the Dame a couple years back).

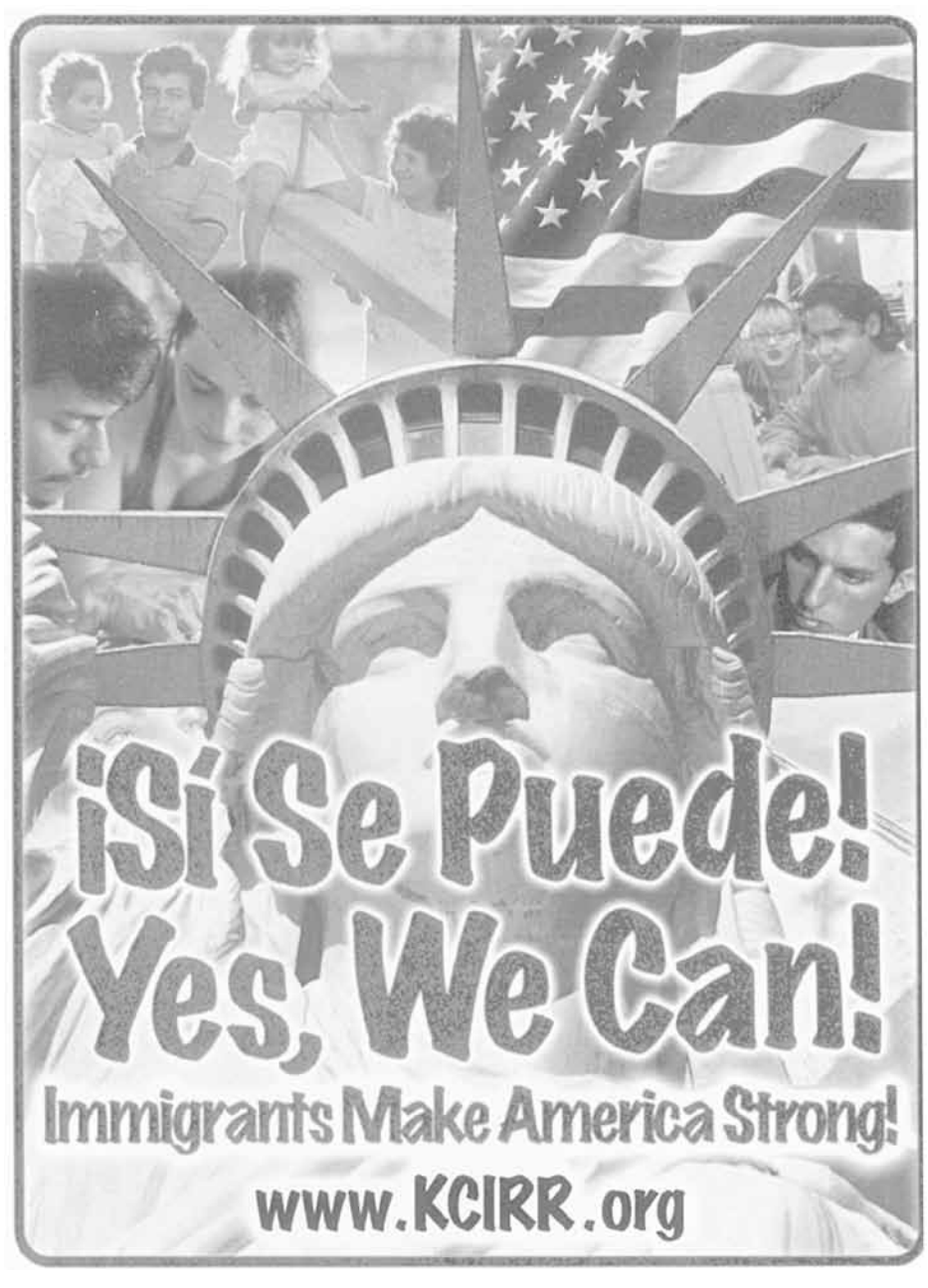
Bishop's acoustic guitar explorations are phenomenal, encompassing lightning-fast Django-style mode jumping, soul-rending ragas, psychotic folk rants, Flamenco, noise, jazz, and so much else without ever lapsing into hipster ethno-fusion posturing—Bishop comes from a punk tradition, but this stuff is powerful, reverential, mind-altering, not a novelty act or party music. His latest record, *The Freak of Araby*, is his first with a full backing band, who also happen to be, conveniently, his tourmates Oaxacan. By all reports, they are fantastic, and this writer has never once been disappointed by anything the man has done. Louisville's own freaked-out rock collective Sapat will be opening. —*TT*

Friday, June 26
Englishman w/ Killer Meteor, Brother Stephen
Al's Bar, 601 North Limestone, 9 P.M.

Tour homecoming show for the great Andrew English, ex-Scourge of the Sea songsmith who nowadays deals in fragile, folky, carefully-arranged downbeat hymns. His spare fingerpicking and lonesome crooning is now accompanied by the equally talented Matt Duncan and Clifton Keller, piano and guitar, respectively, completing English's lovely, mournful harmonies. Have a couple bourbons and howl along—these are your blues, too. —*TT*

Monday, June 29
Mark Lord w/ Morgan Egg, Coptic Nausea
The Void, 518 East High Street, 9 P.M.

The latest alter-ego of Providence, RI artist Christopher Forgues (the man behind the now-defunct Kites and the awesome Picturebox comic series *Powr Masters*), Mark Lord, is a twisted, David Lynchian, darkly sexual one-man Industrial Karaoke act, and one half of the fantastic Daily Life, who charmed/bewildered concertgoers at The Void last year with some psychedelic synthpop striptease. Morgan Egg and Coptic Nausea will open with abstract electronic songforms. —*TT*



Elsewhere in Lex

Culture on the street

By Nick Kidd

• Don't forget to check out Gallery Hop on June 19, happening all over downtown. There's an invaluable map at www.galleryhop2009.com to help you plan your route.

• Dr. John's playing at The Kentucky Theatre on June 25.

• Ecton Park, every Tuesday, you can catch free jazz and big band concerts from 7 though 8:30pm. Bring a lawn chair, blanket, and some snacks down to the park. It's great for kids and adults alike, and it's free. These next two weeks will feature Dan Brock and Friends (June 23) and Jazzberry Jam (June 30).

• Starting on June 16, every Tuesday at Cheapside Park will be Tuesday Night Live, where high-school kids and their bands will play and compete for a chance to play a Thursday Night Live in August.

• On June 24, Joe Scarborough, the host of NBC's "Morning Joe," will be signing his new book "The Last Best Hope" at Joseph-Beth Booksellers. This is your chance to call him an idiot to his face.

Sports

Why I want to hate Ultimate,
why you should too, and why it's nearly impossible to do so

By Keith Halladay

In the part of the world which we commonly call ancient Greece, there existed a fierce rivalry between two of the great city-states of the region, Athens and Sparta.

We all know the popular perception of these cultures, that the Spartans were brutish, empty-headed ascetics who knew nothing but war, and that the Athenians, while accomplished at the martial pursuits, preferred a life of knowledge-seeking, oratory, and contemplation.

In many ways the rivalry embodies the great divide between competing philosophies of life; the Epicurean and the Stoic, perhaps. What is the best we can do while here on Earth? Learn, debate, explore, and indulge, in the Athenian manner? A refined approach, certainly. On the other hand, one might adopt the Spartan path to meaning—possibly less edifying but guaranteed to produce rock-hard abs: exercise. A lot. It's a lifestyle choice.

I, like many Americans who do their pants shopping in the far yonder reaches of the Walmart jeans rack, chose for myself, some time ago, the Athenian lifestyle. Sure, we'll invade Persia if it comes to that, but mostly we like to curl up with a good book and a nice cup of Earl Grey. And maybe some of those bite-size brownies, if a bag or two happens to be in the pantry, or in any of the grocery stores within, say, a 12-mile radius *of* the pantry.

All of which came to mind when Colleen Glenn, North of Center's film editor, suggested I pay a visit to the lush playing fields of Jacobson Park, just south of Man o' War on Athens-Boonesboro, where the steely young men and women of Bluegrass Ultimate arrange themselves in teams of seven for ferocious matches of throwing, running, and catching flying discs.

"Well, *dogs* do that." I said this to my friend Lance, after he'd explained what Colleen had meant by "Ultimate." Lance grimaced. Turns out that he'd played quite a bit of Ultimate in college, which made sense, because Lance played everything in college, or high school, or in the local rec league, or after work, or wherever there were obscure yet demanding sports for people like Lance to play and win: these are the people who chose the Spartan lifestyle.

To sensible Athenians, these are the people who are annoying as hell, which is precisely what I told Lance while rooting for brownies in his pantry.

"But you play disc golf," he retorted, "and that's even more annoying than rhythmic gymnastics. For instance, have you seen what you guys wear out there? When you stole golf's rulebook, did you also have to steal the polyester?"

"Just tell me the damned rules on the way to the park," I muttered, and off we went.

As Lance explained them, the rules of Ultimate (once known as Ultimate *Frisbee*, but for copyright reasons no longer) were simple: seven a side, 70-yard field with 25-yard endzones, the disc may only be advanced by throwing to a teammate, and each endzone catch counts a point. Incomplete passes change possession, and players call their own fouls.

"Basically football with a Frisbee, eh? Clever. How long did it take you automatons to think of that? Amazing you people can even codify standards."

"What did I just say about disc golf?"

"Sensible Athenian sport."

A game was just ending upon our arrival, and a flushed and perspiring Colleen greeted us on the sideline, along with a few dozen of here teammates and opponents, also flushed and perspiring. I noticed in the sky above us an enormous thunderhead, which I took to be a manifestation of Zeus, come to watch the Spartans do battle.

I addressed Colleen: "So this is some sort of covert government-sponsored training program, Spartan?" I stared daggers. Lance just sighed and drifted off to chat about power squats (or whatever) with his countrymen.

Colleen was undimmed. "No, it's a summer Ultimate league," she said brightly. "I'm not sure it has an official name."

"'Axis of evil,' brute?"

"No, just the summer league. There's a fall league too."

I probed. "And this is a 24-hour camp you're running here? Pre-dawn calisthenics and the like? Propaganda films every evening after mess?"

"Just two games a week, evenings Tuesday through Thursday." I was getting nowhere with this line of questioning, and fell silent. Colleen continued: "Let me introduce you to Mark; he knows a lot of the history. And please, would you drop the weird *J'accuse* thing? These are my friends."

Chastened, I shook hands with Mark Strevers, who explained that the summer league counted as members men and women of a variety of ages and abilities, and that you didn't need any particular athletic talent to play, only a willingness to have fun. And everyone certainly seemed to be having fun; even the victims (and there were only a couple, despite the pace of the game and the relatively advanced age of some of the players) of a hard fall or a lightly turned ankle rose quickly and seemed anxious to return to the fray.

Mark was a longstanding member of Lexington's oldest Ultimate team, Black Lung, so named because at the time of its founding, in the early 1980s, a number of its members smoked. (They were made of sterner stuff back then.) Black Lung became, after ragged beginnings, a nationally successful tournament Ultimate squad (presumably after easing back on the habit.)

Mariela Rich puts defensive pressure on Elissa Roycraft.

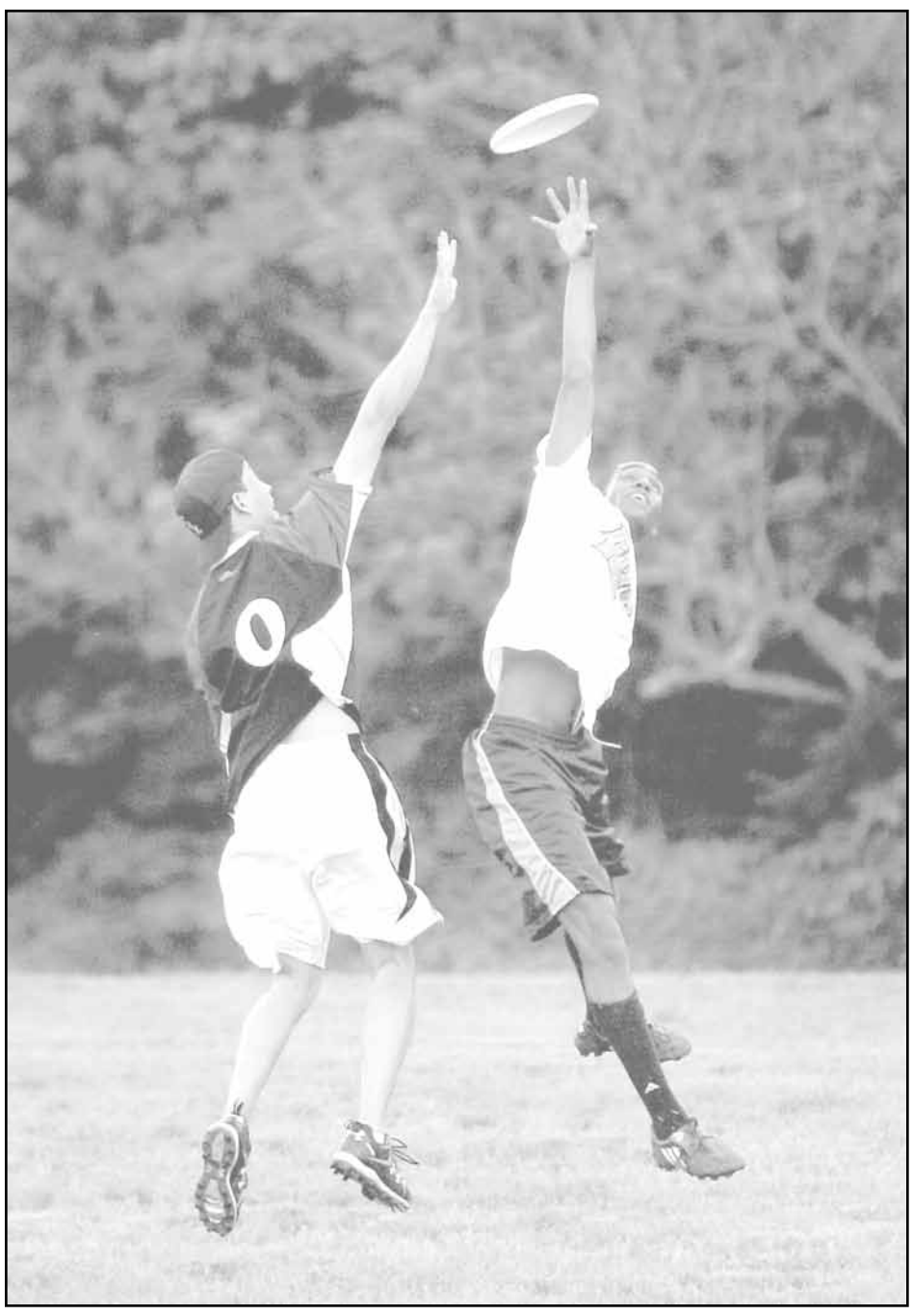
Zeus, in his capacity as master of clouds, oversees the proceedings at Jacobson Park.

Mark then introduced me to Chad Muller, a professor at Bluegrass Community & Technical College, who told a story about landing his first college teaching position through contacts he'd made playing Ultimate. This all sounded, I conceded, considerably more Athenian than Spartan.

As we talked, I noticed that the games featured quite a bit of shouting back and forth between teammates, and I had difficulty following some of the lingo. With Chad's assistance, I learned that a "huck" was a long pass, the Ultimate equivalent of the deep bomb in football. This contrasts with "flow," which describes the movement of the disc up the field via short, rapid passes. Players sometimes caught discs with a "layout," meaning they received the pass while diving. And what gridiron fans would call the kickoff goes by the "pull" in Ultimate speak. Other terms are shared with basketball and ice hockey, such as "break," "clearing," and "pivot."

Easy rules, competitive but non-judgmental, cool terminology, and great exercise, which explains why Ultimate is one of the fastest-growing sports in the country, why an increasing number of school physical-education programs are adding Ultimate to the curriculum (take note KDE!), and why even the most decadent Epicurean should think about putting down the brownies and taking up Ultimate instead.

For more information about Bluegrass Ultimate, and the sport in general, see www.bluegrassultimate.org and www.upa.org. Jacobson Park is located at 4001 Athens-Boonesboro Road; the summer league plays at the soccer fields located near Shelter #6.



Guion Lucas stretches backward to reach the disk, while Dave Wu goes for the block.

Opinion

The demands of our communities

Sometimes we can't help but notice a certain stream of related ideas and questions that drift through the different articles that comprise our paper. Although we didn't realize it at the time, this current issue is one of those instances, which in itself is surprising because we'd begun to think of this as our "throwaway issue" until things started really coming together sometime Sunday night.

So please excuse us if we had no idea until very recently that many of these articles asked a similar question of us: what exactly are the demands that our communities make on us? What do we owe them?

This is a question that might seem dyslexic. We are conditioned to think it the other way, as in what demands can we make on our communities. Different people might offer different demands: that they be safe, provide us with some sort of center, maybe have good schools, possibly increase in property value. For many of us on the editorial board, it's asking that they have a good bar located nearby. A more sober person might ask that the neighborhood be diverse—economically, artistically, racially, ethnically, agriculturally.

We don't want to debate the individual merits of these separate claims. Some no doubt hold much more value than others. Rather, we wish to suggest that this question, insofar as it tends to over-ride other questions and possibilities, is the wrong one to ask. It places us in that familiar destructive position as consumers, this time consumers of neighborhoods. And as consumers we run the risk of turning our neighborhoods into commodities—fads for the more well-off to indulge at the expense of others....perhaps even you.

Perhaps a better inquiry might be to see what our neighborhoods demand of us. Do they require food? Love? Are they deprived of music? Are people adequately sheltered? Do they have access to water? Asking these questions assumes that we do not take but instead offer our diverse productive talents to build a coherent and tolerant community. Frankly, they require more of us as human beings.

But while they require more of us as humans, thankfully the answers that we might arrive at are wonderfully diverse. Support a hip hop community currently underappreciated in Lexington; develop gardening skills; endorse the construction of public rights of ways, particularly pedestrian and bike rights of ways. And these are just things that appeared in here. You could also begin knitting, making yourself available to people in need, collecting honey, brewing beer, helping teach ESL classes, writing comics, or an abundance of other things. Collectively, we have many skills.

For our part, we view NoC as part of our answer to those questions. To be sure, the paper is not our only contribution. We are many, and we have many different talents and interests. But it is, we hope, a small part.

Chevy Chase renter Michael Marchman looks over his public sidewalk garden on the corner of Hart and Ridgeway.

"Garden" (2009)
Crayon
Brian Connors-Manke

Correction
We failed to identify Dean McCleese as the organist in the picture accompanying the article on the Kentucky Tehatre. We sincerely apologize for the omission.

Lexington Free Market

"It's even better than a steal!"

This week's market features bitter greens, assorted herbs, two Tolkien books, and whatever you provide.

Participants encouraged

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

Letter to the editor

A response by audience member Cooky Cox to Brian Rich's May 28 talk on Ana Romero held at Al's Bar.

Brian Rich believes that all people of any race should be able to live in America and not have any problems. On the evening of Brian's speech at Al's Bar, I learned about a person I knew nothing about who was treated like an animal because of the ignorance that people in this nation suffer from. The sincerity in his voice about this subject of Ana Romero expressed great concern for the ever rising hatred that grows in America today. So where and how do we start to change life as America knows it into the dream of true equality that Brian Rich is striving for?

I started working at Krispy Kreme in June 2005 as a second job. At that time the co-workers I had were mostly Mexican. Most of them did not know how to speak English; the two that knew English had positions as key staff. As the years passed, management continued to hire immigrants, and by 2008, 90 percent of my co-workers were Mexican. Over the years I would see the hateful looks flash from the Americans to the Mexicans and racist comments whispered from both sides of the divide.

And yet, the work ethic of Mexicans are like no other that I have seen. These people work hard. There were tasks at Krispy Kreme that were dreaded and no one wanted to do: sweeping and mopping the floors in the lobby after the morning rush, washing down the conveyor belt where donut glaze had hardened, pulling out the two heating wells that hold the chocolate so that the process could be cleaned. The list goes on. I noticed that when these tasks were done by the workers who were not Mexican, the job was far from decent. But when the Mexican workers did the same tasks, the product of their efforts was amazing. The lobby floors looked like they had never been stepped on, the conveyor belt did not have a spot of glaze on it, and the process area was spotless.

Last year I went into Krispy Kreme one night after I got off my regular job to price the boxes for the next day's donut product. There was a lot of tear stained faces and workers with angry hearts. Ten minutes before I got to Krispy Kreme the police had come and arrested Armando. This individual had ten aliases and ran up $20,000 in credit under another person's identity. While the police were at Krispy Kreme, they went through the employee files and found that all but two Mexican workers were working illegally. That was 90 percent of Krispy Kreme's workers. This was horrific. The police informed the manager that he had two weeks to rid the store of all the illegal workers he had there. This meant that he would have to start the hiring process immediately to cover all the positions that were going to be vacant.

I felt sorry for the friends that I had made and for their families because this job was their only form of income. At the same time I was confused and bothered that I will never know the real names of the friends that I had made. Today the workers of Krispy Kreme number five Mexicans. Most of the rest of the workforce are African-Americans. So the saga continues with the hate and animosity.

I grew up in Cardinal Valley in what is now called, along with Winburn, Mexico City. We cannot stop the rise of immigrants that want to better themselves and become a part of this nation. We also cannot stop the hate and racism that plague this nation. As a black native of the Pacific Islands, I also suffer from the ignorance that Mexicans and other latino immigrants face daily from American society. The hate that exists will get worse before it gets better. As I see it, we can embrace immigration and create an inclusive nation, or we can retaliate and make nothing better for the future of our world.

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

The same film (cont.)

continued from page 4

the audience of scholars and to revisit my first distasteful communal experience of the film.

Once again a pivotal moment in the film was the NAZI round-up of Jewish communities to transport them to the death camps. I mentioned my previous experience of watching the film at the megaplex and of the sobbing elderly couple. Some of the scholars present had family members that had died in the Holocaust and they also related stories of those who narrowly escaped the camps. In the heightened state of communal viewing, no doubt aided and abetted by wine, we debated and discussed the meaning of the Holocaust and of the representation of Spielberg's film. My understanding of history, film and, especially, the Holocaust, were deepened through the context of this second viewing. Another aspect of the night's discussion was the protest of fundamentalist Christian groups who believed the film shouldn't be shown unedited on TV and conservative Oklahoma congressman Tom Coburn's statement that the airing of the film was an affront to "decent-minded individuals everywhere."

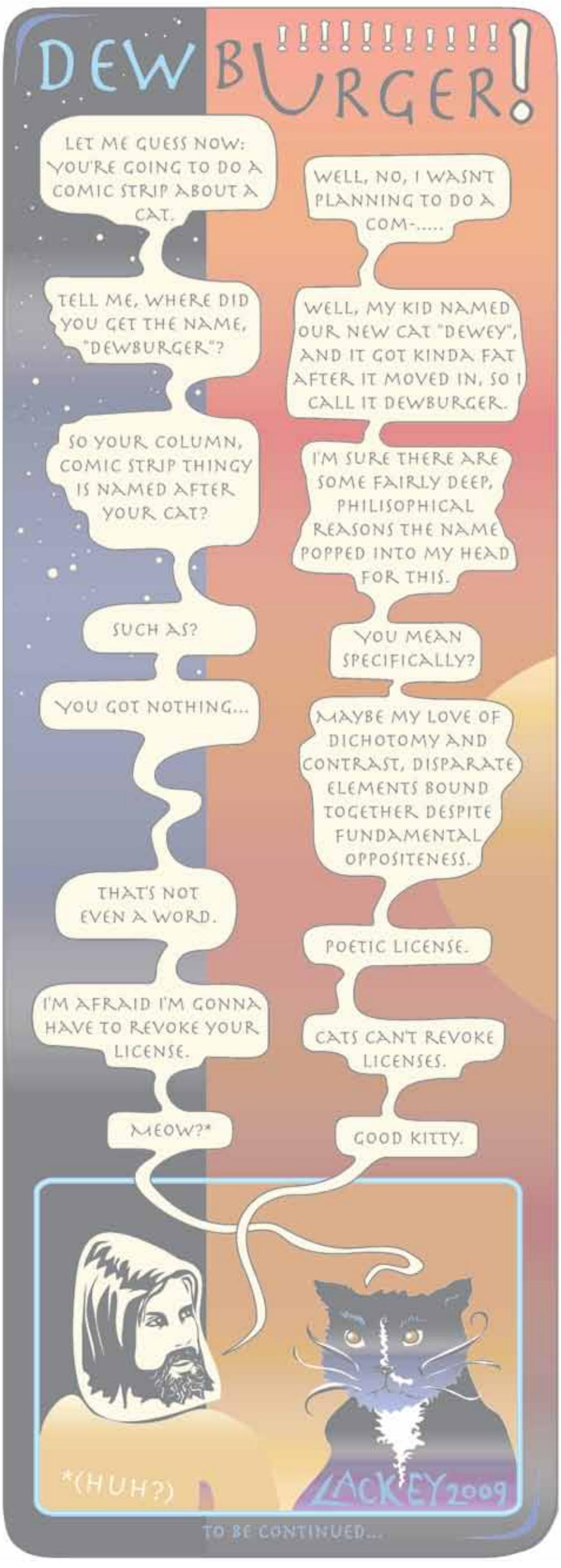
The third contextual viewing of Schindler's List was during another equally powerful historical moment that exposed some of the worst aspects of human cruelty. It was the year after the commercial-free broadcast and I was teaching Introduction to Popular Culture/Mass Media courses for Bowling Green State University. During the early part of the semester a student group in the class did a presentation on the film. They claimed that it was a unique document because it provided insight to a unique event in human history and that it let us understand this isolated example of evil. When I questioned the students about their claim that the Holocaust was an "isolated example of evil," they said it was an example of how bad humanity was and how something like the Holocaust could never happen again.

Unfortunately, because of its increasing use as **the primary** historical example of the ultimate "evil" of humanity, many people were beginning to understand the Holocaust as an isolated example of humanity's depraved low point: a place we were once at, but never would return to again. I attempted to get my students to understand that this was not an isolated event and that there were many examples of similar collective acts of violent genocide throughout history and the present time. I was struggling to somehow break through their assumption that it could never happen again because now we "know" better. I fell into a state of bewildered despair for the next couple of weeks as I struggled with how I could bring a new perspective to their understanding of Schindler's List and the Holocaust--to provide a context that would combat the sense of it being an isolated, special circumstance, caused by depraved monsters, rather than the self-interested actions of everyday humans. Then, as sometimes happens, events provided another opportunity for revisiting the film.

During the middle of the semester Dr. Lisa Wolford, a performance scholar at BGSU, hosted an interactive performance piece "El Mexterminator and Cyber Vato", featuring Guillermo Gomez-Peña and Roberto Sifuentes, as part of an ongoing series on campus. I heard that the performance was going to address stereotyped and racist representations of Chicano/as and Latino/as. Sensing that this would provide a good opportunity to introduce my students to a different cultural sensibility and to open up the spatial environment of the sealed classroom, I decided to bring my entire class to the performance. It was my hope that the performative diorama would push us to expand our understanding of mediated performances, cultural stereotypes and historical narratives. This performance opened up a new world for me and the students. It forced us to examine our American history from the lens of (an) other cultural perspective and it ultimately altered my understanding of the performative nature of knowledge (http://reconstruction.eserver.org/BReviews/revElMex.htm).

A week later after the "El Mexterminator and Cyber Vato" performances, the South African Truth and Reconciliation committee was holding public hearings and parts of their video broadcasts of amnesty confessions were going to be aired on *60 Minutes*. The Post-Apartheid government of South Africa had decided that a full public exposure of the crimes carried out under the former Apartheid government would ensure that the world would never forget the atrocities that were committed during the Apartheid era. *60 Minutes* broadcast an episode that featured South African white men discussing in detail the everyday gruesome tasks of disposing and hiding murdered victims, including the difficulties of completely incinerating a human body.

My class watched these historical broadcasts and developed a new understanding of the problems of isolating the Holocaust, or any collective violence, as a unique event, that has never happened before, or will never happen again. They asked if we could, as a class, watch Schindler's List again. I agreed with the understanding that we would all research the broader historical background of the event. The experience of watching students watch this film, actively taking notes, and later debating the history of the Holocaust, with a deeper awareness of its development and its future ramifications, was an amazing experience. It once again completely transformed my understanding of the film and the potential for teaching about the politics/aesthetics of films. Most importantly, along with the previous two viewings of *Schindler's List*, my understanding of the power of contextual viewings deepened my investigations into the potential of media studies.



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.