

Democracy floods capital city



Demonstrators gather in front of the Kentucky State Capitol for “I Love Mountains Day,” held this year on Valentine’s Day.

A new era: Appalachia rises

By Danny Mayer

The banner headline Saturday morning in the *Herald-Leader* read “Egyptians welcome new era.” The accompanying photo appeared to be a close shot of photographer Hussein Malla’s hand flashing the Peace/Victory sign as he looked down on a celebratory crowd at Cairo’s Tahrir Square. The lead line to the lead story noted that the revolt against dictator president Hosni Mubarak was “led by the young people of Egypt.”

Inside the paper, journalists expressed concern for Israel and pondered which Mideast country would fall next to people power. On TV, analysts wondered if democracy would jump the Atlantic, spread to Mexico and topple Felipe Calderon.

In Frankfort, Kentucky, at the capitol building, a group of between thirteen and twenty Kentucky residents woke up Saturday morning with stiff backs, having spent the previous night on the floor of Kentucky Governor Steve Beshear’s outer office while staging an act of (semi-condoned) civil disobedience. Some of the civilly disobedient are pictured in the Saturday *Herald-Leader*, a smaller front page photo below Malla’s hand, under the headline, “Protesters told they can spend the night.”

The picture’s caption reads: “Gov. Steve Beshear, hands clasped, listened to an anti-coal statement by author Wendell Berry, right, on Friday in the Governor’s Office reception area in Frankfort.

Dissatisfied with the meeting, Berry and his group vowed to occupy the office until arrested, but Beshear said they wouldn’t be ejected and could stay the weekend.” Their backs are stiff this Saturday morning because the majority of the occupiers top fifty

years of age. Their bones are no longer young. Sleeping on the floor in your clothes ceases to be fun at thirty. It ceases to be fun for all ages on night two.

The group, called Appalachia Rising, eventually spend three nights in the governor’s office, leaving around noon Monday to join the crowds at I Love Mountains Day. As a result of their direct action, the governor has promised to travel to Eastern Kentucky to view mine sites with area residents.

The coverage has allowed regional newspapers to keep a steady focus on Beshear’s cretinist lawsuit against the EPA. Reporters for the *Kentucky Kernel*, a publication long suffering from apolitical detached reporting, became embedded in the Governor’s office and informed, and have begun exciting reports on mountaintop removal that now keep their student peers (and their faculty and staff) informed. People from around the world sent expressions of solidarity.

It would be easy to call the activists holed up on thin cheaply-carpeted floors in Frankfort this weekend heroes, but they are not. They are not graced with superhuman skills. They are not blessed with superior intelligence. They are not even particularly young or hip.

So let’s say it straight. Appalachia Rising are teachers and nurse practitioners, retired coal miners and state police radio technicians, filmmakers and students. Their backs stiffen. Their bladders fill quickly. They miss their loved ones and homes, must go to work, attend to other life things. They are you and me. If they are exceptional, it is only because they, like the Egyptians who took to the streets demanding change, take serious their commitments to democracy.

Fragile victory

Will U.S. foreign aid impede the will of the Egyptian people?

By Michael Dean Benton

As I write this (Sunday February 13), the Egyptian dictator Hosni Mubarak has been forced by the Egyptian people to step down as president after thirty years of ruling the country with an iron fist. The Armed Forces Supreme Council has temporarily taken control of the nation while the Egyptian people are still occupying Tahrir Square and are publicly demonstrating for more democratic openness in the decision making on the future direction of their country.

As we congratulate the Egyptian people on this partial revolutionary victory it is time for Americans to reflect on their own involvement with and support of the 30-year reign of Mubarak.

Mubarak and the U.S.: true valentines

We have long been a major problem in the world. We provide backdoor support of any brutal regime that privileges American corporate interests over the interests of their own people. We actively destabilize, if not outright attack, any social-justice-minded leader that privileges their own people over the profiteering American/Western way of privatizing natural resources or public services.

Our involvement with Mubarak’s dictatorship has been that of a close friendship, with many American presidents citing his support of Israeli and American ambitions in the region as a necessary evil. A series of American presidents have also claimed access to the Suez Canal for American military ships as a geopolitical necessity.

Our involvement takes on an even more sinister tone, though, as we recognize that as far back as 1995 during the Clinton presidency, through a

process known as extraordinary rendition, the C.I.A. has been transporting prisoners to Egypt for interrogations and torture. These have been administered in Egypt by the 18 year former-head of the feared Egyptian National Intelligence Agency Omar Suleiman.

For 18 days as the world watched breathlessly, the Egyptian people withstood attacks by Mubarak’s police forces. They withstood the incarceration and torture of thousands of people abducted from the streets, open attacks upon journalists by pro-Mubarak thugs, and the murder of hundreds of protestors. Through this period the Obama administration continued its financial and moral support of the Mubarak regime.

Only when they lost trust in Mubarak’s ability to contain the people did they shift their support to the now Vice-President Omar Suleiman. When Mubarak presented an incoherent public refusal to step down the people responded with rage against the symbols of national power. They forced Suleiman the next day to announce that President Mubarak would indeed step down and that the Armed Forces Supreme Council would take control of the nation.

On the surface this is exactly what the people have demanded all along. The president has stepped down. The military has suspended the constitution and dissolved Mubarak’s parliament. Still there is tension in the streets as the military demands the Egyptian people now disband and go home. Egyptians from all walks-of-life have refused to go home and continue to occupy Tahrir Square and other important public places. A great victory has been achieved by the Egyptian

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The Neighborhood

Maximizing our park yields

Building a basil economy

By Danny Mayer

A recent survey by students in a UK rural sociology class found that most customers of the Lexington Farmers Market (LFM) come from wealthy and educated households. The survey, which included over 500 responses, took place over two weeks at the three LFM locations: under the Fifth Third Pavilion at Cheapside and in the parking lots of Southland (Sundays) and Rupp Arena (Tuesdays and Thursdays). Nearly sixty percent of respondents at the market reported a household income greater than \$50,000, a figure almost five thousand dollars more than Lexington’s median (\$45,500). A little over sixty-five percent held at least a bachelor’s degree.

As a Lexington resident, the survey’s findings trouble me. This city has a strong food community, the result of a limited but hardworking bunch of public gardeners, suburban growth (which provides space for growing) and a city population not too far removed from rural life. Our city leaders have done a good job in calling attention to the wonders of locally grown food, but as the survey of the Lexington Farmer’s Markets suggests, once again they have not done a good job of granting the entire city access to such food.

One of the city’s recent signature construction projects, the Fifth Third shelter at Cheapside is often cited as an accelerate of the city’s downtown farmer’s market growth, and correspondingly, as an excellent example of city/private partnerships contributing to a community good. This is partly true. I’m a regular supporter of the downtown market—market day purchases provide a great percentage of my food needs for the week. I love the walk. I love seeing vendors. I love the music and

the kids and watching Shane Tedder pedaling for shakes. But under that rosy story, the survey of the Lexington Farmer’s Market exposes real questions about who gets access to that well-funded, well-supported market. Here I’m somewhat of an anomaly. Most of the city relies upon cars for regular travel. A downtown market, located away from most residential homes, privileges those who can drive in and out of the city: usually (by which I mean statistically), this means more wealthy, more educated folks. (In this sense, city markets also reinforce Lexington car culture, something city leaders claim to want to minimize.)

As with the rest of city development, most city residents have been left out of the farmer’s market zeitgeist, in part because no markets have located nearby them. This should be seen, in part, as a warning that not all small-scale local private sector initiatives, universally lauded across the country

(and here in Lexington) these past five years, benefit communities equally. One way to address the problem of access to food markets would be for the city to allow, encourage, and if necessary, organize small weekly farmer’s markets at its parks located throughout the city. Instead of reflexively thinking of centralizing into the urban core, the city should focus its efforts on decentralizing citizen access to markets. Go where we live.

Such markets would not supplant the downtown market, but rather provide new markets on new days at new times. This also might have the by-product benefit of getting Lexingtonians to see and interact with their city and its citizens, rather than always having to go downtown for their cultural and culinary needs.

Maximizing Park Yields

We mostly think of parks as sites of leisure, as places to play or picnic or explore. These are all wonderful and needed things to do, but we should ask that our public parks be more productive than simply providing leisure space. Lexington has a diverse number of parks situated throughout the city. Big ones like Veterans, rural ones like Raven’s Run, small urban ones like Duncan Park and slightly larger suburban ones like River Hill. Such places could either host weekly markets or be used as rent-free acreage to grow food for such markets.

Using our parks as market and agricultural spaces has a number of benefits. For one, markets are the easiest way to encourage small scale business development. Most small business owners have small volume and profit margins. They do not need, initially, the added expense of

renting a space—particularly agricultural merchants whose business space is often their tended garden or field. By encouraging, for example, five new markets to open up around the city at its parks, we are also encouraging small scale enterprise as producers and vendors get access to new markets without having to pay for location.

It is the cheapness of the markets that also allows them to be set up in less-profitable areas. In the northside, for example, the private sector food industry has failed the neighborhood as it has followed profitability out toward other (mostly southside) locations. By having, say, Tuesday night markets at Duncan Park (North Limestone and Fifth), sellers can tap into a market without having to commit all of their resources to that space. Maximizing our parks thus potentially helps curtail the destructive needs of the private sector to chase money rather than people.

Short term, long term

Most importantly, I see the development of a series of small farmer’s markets as a matter of justice, as a way for a greater number of citizens to have access to fresh food, but I am not naive. Markets need time to grow. They need support. It is the government’s responsibility to provide such support.

I propose the creation of five weekly markets that take place Mondays through Fridays in the early evening, perhaps between 4:00 and 7:00 P.M., when most Lexingtonians are in the process of returning home from work or school for dinner. Though times may vary according to location, the ideal is to provide neighborhood residents a regular time and place to

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Announcements

Watershed talk at Loudoun House
The Castlewood Neighborhood Association is glad to welcome Amanda Gumbert to our next meeting, on February 24th, 2011, 6:30 P.M. Amanda works as an Extension Specialist for Water Quality in the Agriculture Programs Department at UK. She serves as a liaison between the UK Cooperative Extension Service and the Kentucky Division of Conservation. Her role is to maintain communications between these two agencies, and conduct outreach and education efforts related to agricultural water quality issues and nonpoint source pollution.

Amanda will explain the boundaries of our water shed and some of the things we can do to protect it. Talk is free and all are welcome—please join us at the Loudoun House (on Castlewood Drive).

Discarded opens at L.O.T. Gallery
Educators, artists and community walkers Kremena Todorava and Kurt Gohde invite the public (this means you) to join them for the opening reception to their *Discarded* project. The two spent a year taking photos of discarded furniture left on Lexington streets, and the people in the immediate surrounding communities. In the coming months, you will encounter some of these photos regularly in *North of Center*, in our Neighborhood section. (In fact, one should be on this page right now.)

The reception is Friday, February 18, 7:00-10:00 P.M., at L.O.T. Gallery, 527 East Third Street. L.O.T.’s just past the intersection of Race and Third Streets.

Seed Swap and meeting for Edible Garden Series
The Edible Garden Series will hold the first meeting of 2011 at Beaumont Presbyterian Church on Saturday 26 February from 10:00 to 11:00 A.M. The gathering will be a seed swap and meet-n-greet for gardeners of all experience levels.

“This is a great networking opportunity, so even gardeners who don’t have seed to swap should plan on attending,” said John Walker, founder and coordinator of the Edible Garden Series.

“We get to share ideas about this year’s garden plans and stories about last year’s garden successes and failures.” He pointed out that the seed swap may allow gardeners to try out new varieties with just a few seeds rather than an entire package. “That can be a lot less intimidating, especially for a beginning gardener,” he added.

The Edible Garden Series, now in its fourth year, meets about six times throughout the season and focuses especially on topics related to vegetable, fruit, and herb gardening. For example, the 19 March meeting will be about how to start seeds and care for seedlings until they can be planted outside. Registration is not required, and there is no cost to attend the meeting.

Beaumont Presbyterian Church is located at 1070 Lane Allen Road in Lexington. Parking and entrance to the fellowship hall are in the rear, off Athenia Drive.

For more information contact John Walker at igrowfood@insightbb.com or visit faithfeedslex.org.

Free Community Yoga Class

Lexington Healing Arts Academy

Every 2nd Sunday of the month. Next class February 27, 4:00 - 5:15 P.M.

www.lexingtonhealingarts.com 859-252-5656

Silver Maple Way, 500 block

Kevin and friend



Kevin agreed to sit on the couch for us for three reasons: 1) he had seen us photographing another couch some time ago and had asked people about what we were doing, so he knew about the project, 2) he had once taken a summer course in theater at Transylvania and felt a degree of allegiance to us for that reason, and 3) we complimented his outfit and enabled Kevin to admit to everyone that he dressed that day hoping to be photographed (one of his necklaces had a bejeweled version of the baby from *The Family Guy*). However, it was hard to keep him committed to the project as groups of people kept driving by and yelling at him to get off the couch because it had bugs. A yoga mat we kept in the car as a deterrent to bedbugs saved the day.

Image and text by Kurt Gohde and Kremena Todorova

Egypt (cont.)

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revolutionaries, yet the people recognize they are still far from the democratic society they desperately want for their country.

Federal taxes, foreign aid, southern military corps

Mostly ignored in the mainstream American media is the fact that Omar Suleiman the former head of Egyptian National Intelligence and just recently the Egyptian Vice President under Mubarak, is a favorite client of the American C.I.A. and an influential part of the Armed Forces Supreme Council.

The Egyptian military, while as not as explicitly corrupt or brutal as Mubarak’s official police and Suleiman’s secret police forces, is still dependent on American largesse for its financial solvency. Will the military truly seek to install a true democracy when both the American and Israeli governments fear actual democracy in Egypt, preferring instead the docile-to-American-interests military as rulers of Egypt.

One may hesitate to accept the claim that the Egyptian military is

so subsumed to American and Israeli interests as to subvert their own people’s movement for democracy. This is why the Institute for Southern Studies magazine, *Facing South*, recently reviewed the Department of Defense’s own records of American corporate contracts to supply the Egyptian military. What the institute found is important in understanding the extent of American support of Mubarak and the implications of the Egyptian military’s assumption of power.

Egypt, after Israel, has been the second-largest recipient of foreign aid from the U.S. Government. It has been receiving approximately 2 billion dollars a year. Where does that money go and what does it support? According to the DOD resources researched by *Facing South*, the majority of it goes back to corporate military contractors that supply Egypt with high-tech weapons, specialized training and surveillance systems. *Facing South*’s report focuses on contracts located only in the American South. One might surmise that this is but the tip of the iceberg.

A number of major corporations have benefited in the last year from

American taxpayers support of the Egyptian military structure. These include Lockheed Martin (Fort Worth, TX/Orlando, FL), which received \$213 milllion for 20 F-16 fighter jets and \$46 million for night vision sensor systems for Apache Helicopters; DRS C3 and Aviation (Horsham, PA), what was awarded \$65 million for surveillance hardware and services; L3 Communications Ocean Systems (Sylmar, CA/Garland, TX) which took \$24.7 million for sonar equipment and \$6.6 million for military imaging equipment; Deloitte Consulting (Arlington, VA), who pocketed \$28.1 million for planning and support for aircraft programs; and Boeing (Mesa, AZ), \$22.5 million winners for 10 Apache helicopters.

This is only part of the *Facing South* report, but it gives us a clear glimpse into the level of support the American government, through your taxes, provides to the Egyptian military. It also shows how taxpayer monies given in “foreign aid” get directed back into the coffers of American weapons manufacturers. The defense industry is one of the most powerful and influential

American lobbying forces. Most elected officials are afraid to directly challenge the military-industrial system.

So, yes, my heart sings at the courageous victories of the recent brave Egyptian people as they poured into the streets and demanded their freedoms from a brutal dictatorship long supported and funded by the American military-industrial system.

At the same time, I am cautious, and even fearful, about the implications of the Egyptian military taking over the operations of government. I believe that American citizens need to join with the Egyptian democratic revolutionaries to demand that our military-industrial dominated governments support the institution of democracy in Egypt, in other parts of the world, and here at home.

For more on the Institute for Southern Studies:

- www.southernstudies.org
 - www.defense.gov/contracts/
- To access the Department of Defense’s contract database:*
- www.defense.gov/contracts/

Park yields (cont.)

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do their shopping. Markets need not be large—2-3 vendors should do at first until market participation exceeds that capacity, which may never happen.

Since Lexington’s farmer’s markets currently do not attract a diverse demographic, the city should pay attention to choosing the locations for any park-markets. My own ideas, developed mainly through observation, are that Duncan Park, Shillito Park and River Hill Park are possible locations: visible, well-used and not far from large parts of Lexington’s population. I’m sure there are many others. Market locations could be determined by neighborhood needs, or neighborhood resources. Kitchen Gardener’s John Walker, for example, lives nearby Cardinal Valley and might be cajoled into helping organize a market in that neighborhood.

Long term, the city must direct steady funds to support continued market growth. Perhaps a percentage of money the city provides for purchasing rural development rights could be diverted into providing regular seed money to underwrite the city’s entrance into the local food market. This might include helping to organize small buying collectives, so that backyard growers can pool their resources and sell produce to the markets. (In essence, this is making your house a more productive, efficient, economic space. Will you specialize in blueberries? Basil? Beans? Pepper relish?) I would also think that the city could rip up some of its grassy parkland and commit to creating a more specialized class of city farmers working public

land. It happened pretty quickly during the 1940s Victory Gardens. What are city leaders waiting for?

This part will cost money initially (though astronomically less than any Rupp Arena renovations or Distillery District funding), but will ultimately prove economically smart. The city has a market advantage in that its farmers won’t have to pay rent on the land.

In terms of future market development, my friends at the Co-Op tell me that they can’t keep local produce in their store. It flies off the shelf. As oil costs rise, it seems the price of a Kroger tomato has gotten closer to the price of a Co-Op tomato. Markets for food do exist—our bellies cannot be outsourced. If the private sector complains, respond thusly: “Fuck you. We ensure that all citizens have access to food markets; you failed in that responsibility. Our concern is feeding people who are currently going hungry.”

The long term goal should be to decentralize our farmer’s markets, to quit lavishly supporting “big” markets and to emphasize the development of more small-scale growers and sellers, buttressed by city supported farming. The city needs to create a diverse network of growers—from backyard dabblers to five acre farmers—that are both publicly (at the large scale) and privately (at the small scale) funded. Ultimately, the city should think of itself as encouraging the transition of Lexington’s suburban layouts of big, sprawling lots, into places that can produce money through agricultural production. Subsidize the planting of produce not lawns. The vision is not cutting edge creative so much as it is

old-world immigrant. (Who knew—creatives don’t have all the solutions...)

Now what: playing politics

The city has a large incoming group of council members who care passionately about their district and city parks. The vice-mayor previously sat on the parks advisory board. New at-large councilman Steve Kay has been involved in the private/public London Ferrell Garden on Third Street. Incoming District One councilman Chris Ford’s work in affordable housing undoubtedly has run upon issues of food access. Jay McCord and Tom Blues have long offered support for developing and improving public parks. George Myers’ council page features a photo of him helping dig holes

for River Hill Park’s new children’s playground.

We hope that these councilpersons will work together to provide low cost amenities for their constituents. Such thinking, of course, might fly in the face of private sector mythology, and it might not draw the same “wow” factor of a new sports/arts/entertainment district, but it will be much more valuable to the community.

For our part, I will offer up one large business card size space of free advertising in *North of Center*, every issue, should our city leaders decide to expand it to the rest of the city. And I will provide produce and vendor help for anyone wanting to start a market at Duncan Park, whether the city endorses such an action or not.

Mountaintop removal: the scenic tour

Roadmap to destruction

Below are a series of road trips to view mountaintop removal sites in Kentucky. Directions for the trips come from a pamphlet put out by Lexingtonian Dave Cooper.

- From Pikeville, take US 23 South for 12 miles. Turn right onto KY-1460 (Virgie Road). Go 0.7 miles to see an active mine on your right.
- From the Pikeville Wal Mart on US 23 take US 119 North towards Williamson, WV, for 7 miles. 10nemile past the Bent Branch exit look for an “EQT” sign on the right. Turn right on the access road to see active mining.
- To see a coal slurry pond, take the Hal Rogers Parkway to Hazard, KY, then take KY-15 North for about 6.5 iles. Turn left into the Coalfields Industrial Park and drive 1.5 miles—stay on the main road—to see the pond on your left. Go back to KY-15 and turn left, then go 0.7 miles and turn right to the Wendell Ford Airport. Go up the hill and bear right at the Y. You can see an active mine towards the back and homes built on a reclaimed mine site.
- From Hazard, take KY-15 South for 15 miles. Pass over Carr Creek Lake and immediately turn left onto KY-1231 North. Travel uphill 3.4 miles and park at the beige utility shack with a blue roof to see a huge valley fill and MTR.
- From McDonalds in Whitesburg, take US 119 South over Pine Mountain. At the bottom, turn left onto KY-932. Go past Bad Branch into Virginia. Keep going. At B&J Grocery go straight onto VA-707. One mile later turn right through an iron gate, then immediate left. Park here and walk up to the blue water tower.
- In Harlan County, take KY-160 fro Lynch over Black Mountain into Virginia. Go down the mountain, then turn around in Inman, VA. There are incredible views of MTR ont the Virginia side of the mountains.

Weather’s getting nice. Take a drive and see for yourself.

Visit the website www.mountainroadshow.com for a downloadable document with detailed driving directions, commentary, photos, Google satellite and video links.

Arts, entertainment & sports area not needed

By Danny Mayer

The last several weeks have provided an excellent example of how city leaders direct city needs inward to the downtown core. With UK now realizing that private business cannot profit greatly enough to construct a new basketball coliseum alongside Rupp Arena (last year’s ingenious plan), CEO Lee Todd has thrown the ball back to City Government to get the job done.

Mayor Gray has not (yet) supported construction of a new building. Instead he has called for a study of Rupp Arena that will cover costs and design potential for the arena’s renovation or the construction of a new basketball coliseum. His comments have also consistently noted the importance of developing a “sports/arts/cultural area,” which would sprawl west from the arena toward the (not yet thriving) Distillery District, which is currently

seeking city and state funds in the form of TIF financing. Such a complex, with Rupp as its anchor, would be a win for Lexington’s economic future, suggested Gray.

Not long after Gray’s Rupp comments, a thoughtful piece authored by a Lexingtonian studying design at an Ivy League school appeared in the Lexington *Herald-Leader*. The article repeated Gray’s assertion that a Rupp sports/arts/cultural hub would be a net benefit for all Lexingtonians. The author provided specific plans that showed how public funds, leveraged with private money, could create such an area through a Rupp renovation. Funds could pay to better connect the Distillery District nearby on Manchester; money could be generated to construct an amphitheater and market area in Rupp’s west-parking lot; the

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Madness seek Honk! help

(Honk! seek madness help)

By Captain Comannokers

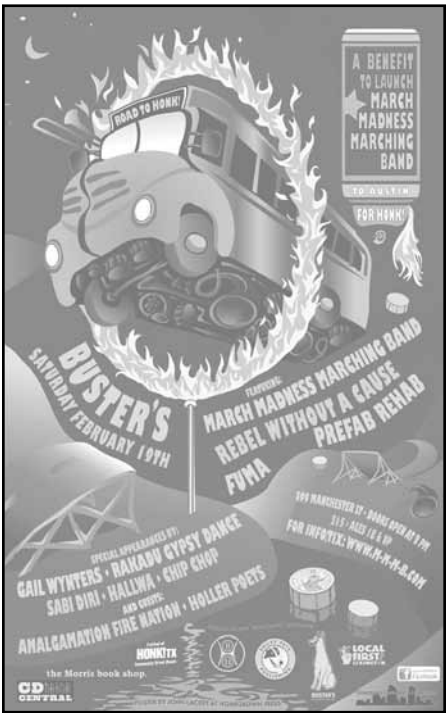
John Lackey’s poster art for the March Madness Marching Band benefit show at Buster’s on Saturday, February 19, depicts a bus flying through a ring of fire and a blasting trombone from one of the windows. I’m not sure the band’s bus will actually go into orbit, or if it will perform any circus tricks down the highway, but I wouldn’t put any of it past ‘em.

The show is a benefit to get the massive Lexington ensemble, consisting of dozens of musicians and color guard members, down to Austin, Texas, for the Honk! festival in March.

Honk! is a madcap celebration of community street bands from all over the country performing for FREE all over the city—unleashing laughter, hops, skips and jumps of musical joy into the Austin atmosphere.

And if you have ever seen March Madness Marching Band perform in any number of parades or at countless events over the past two years you know that this event is like a pilgrimage to Mecca. No, not the one that they

practice at each week on Chair Ave in Lexington, but a spiritual journey of some sort—however marching bands sift through that sort of metaphysical experience.



Bus flies through ring of fire. Poster by John Lackey.

I know some of these outlandishly fun folks in MMMB and they deserve this trip. They deserve it because they are in it to make people smile. That’s always been their goal—that, and supporting the community organizations they believe in. They don’t get paid to play, but they certainly help others in raising funds by supplying their unique flair and style when called upon by their beloved community.

And now they are asking that same community to help them represent the city of Lexington on a national stage—where bands from New Orleans, Chicago, Los Angeles, Seattle and Boston will all be throwing down massive party grooves for a city that knows a thing or two about a party.

I say we christen that crazy, flyin’ bus with a bottle of the bubbly, and watch as it rolls away—instruments hanging out the windows, making a glorious clamor all the way to Austin and back.

Outside of the MMMB playing three sets at the Buster’s show, there will also be performances by Rebel Without



Leif Rigney, trumpet, prepares to be launched in bus through ring of fire.

A Cause, FUMA, Prefab Rehab as well as appearance by Gail Winters, Rakadu Gypsy Dance, Sabi Diri, Hallwa, Chip Chop, Amalgamation Fire Nation and Holler Poets. Doors at 8:00 p.m. 18 & up.

Live music you might be inclined to pay money to hear: 2/18-27

Friday, February 18

Matt Duncan
Al’s Bar; 601 N. Limestone. 8:00 P.M.

I Netflixed a documentary about Scott Walker a few weeks ago. I learned that Walker is a recluse who sings with lots of vibrato. He used to sing catchy, melodic pop songs, but now he sings songs that are the compositions of someone who’s lost his mind. Not in that embarrassing Brian Wilson way, but more of a syphilitic Van Gogh vibe.

By way of contrast, Matt Duncan sing catchy pop songs, largely vibrato-less, that sound like the compositions of people who once lost their minds, but recognized early enough that in social situations the dark, syphilitic thing can be off-putting to others, and so came back from the brink and rejoined civil society.

Monday, February 21

The Fervor with Cabrew Montage
Cosmic Charlie’s; 388 Woodland. 9:00 P.M.

One of the fun things to do when you’re a music snob and given the opportunity to write your snobby opinions in a blog, or a small publication

such as this newspaper, is to denigrate—nay, ridicule—the musical opinions of other snobs writing for other blogs or small publications. And so this passage, from a Cincinnati-area web site:

“Louisville’s The Fervor combines the twilight sway of Velvet Underground’s first album with Classic Rock-informed song arrangements and contemporary Indie Rock sonics for a mesmerizing, emotive sound that creeps and builds like a gathering storm.”

Let’s take this apart. First, “twilight sway”: are we to infer that The Fervor (and VU) play music suitable for swaying in the twilight? Are other musics less suitable for twilight swaying? Do people sway more in twilight than at other times of day? If I like to listen to The Fervor prone, still, and in the late morning, does that make me a freak? It’s a slippery slope, you see.

Next, “Classic-Rock informed song arrangements.” I have in front of me two classic rock records: “Close to the Edge,” by Yes, which features three tracks of 19, ten, and nine minutes that have movements and sub-themes and weird patterns; and Rod Stewart’s “Every Picture Tells a Story,”

the title track of which has the structure A-A-A-A-A-B.

Finally, “creeps and builds like a gathering storm.” Fine, but can’t you say the same thing about Wagner? The Fervor sound nothing like Wagner. And why does it always have to be a storm? Why not mix it up? “The Fervor has a sound that creeps and builds like the housing bubble.” Resonates, no?

Point is, you don’t need to spout nonsense to be a music snob. Just write this: I like The Fervor, and since my taste is eminently more refined than your own, you should like them too.

Friday, February 25

The Compromise
Cheapside; 131 Cheapside. 9:00 P.M.

Young, endearingly scruffy, and radio-ready. Since it’s the Cheapside, they’re playing Saturday too.

Sunday, February 27

Coles Whalen
Natasha’s; 112 Esplanade. 8:00 P.M.

It used to be that when you asked somebody if he or she liked country music, you both knew what kind of music you meant: music with twang, steel, heartache, and whiskey. And if you asked that same person about pop music, you meant something else entirely, Ronnie Milsap notwithstanding.

Nowadays this sort of mutual comprehension has passed into...er...the past, for where there once was mainstream country music over here and mainstream pop music over there, now there is just mainstream music. That’s the genre: mainstream; the music of Faith Hill, Shania Twain, Taylor Swift, and other women who are awfully nice to look at and can more or less carry a tune. Men play mainstream too, but I can’t abide the abdication of masculinity involved in that creative process, so I won’t acknowledge any of them here.

Which reminds of me of home improvement warehouses. I don’t know about you, but when I go shopping for lumber and power tools, I don’t want Enrique Iglesias providing the soundtrack. Not saying the store has to pipe in “Twilight of the Thunder God,” although that would be pretty darn cool, but must the endeavor be drained of every last drop of testosterone? Here’s a conversation I had at Home Depot last week, between myself, Jim the hardware & tools clerk, and Nelly Furtado:

Jim: “Well, if you want to go to the two-horsepower, Bosch makes a nice product.”

Nelly: “I’m like a biiiiird...”

Me: “How’s it compare to the Porter Cable?”

Nelly: “I wanna fly awayaaaaay...”

Jim: “I think the Bosch is better made, but I’ve heard no complaints about either of them.”

Nelly: “I don’t know where my soul is...”

Me: “Lemme think about it. Can you talk to me about roundover bits?”

Nelly: “I don’t know where my home is...”

Actually, Nelly, I’ll you where your home is: it’s at the Bed Bath & Beyond, and surely not in this hardware store. And Lowe’s is no damned better.

To sum up: Coles Whalen plays mainstream music, she is pretty good at it, she’s coming to Natasha’s, and you’ll probably even hear her next time you’re looking for power tools.

—Buck Edwards

Tee Dee Young reps Lex at IBC

NoC Music

Local legend Tee Dee Young and his crack backing band, Scandalous, were eliminated in the semi-finals of the 2011 International Blues Challenge, held earlier this month in Memphis.

Colorado’s Lionel Young Band took top honors in the band category, while Germany’s George Schroeter and Marc Breitfelder won in the solo/duo category.

Tee Dee Young and Scandalous were heralded shortly the official competition, however, as the 2011 Beale Street Blues Kings, an honor bestowed



by the Beale Street Merchant’s Association. Their performance at the New Daisy Theatre clinched the award, which included a cash prize and leather jackets all round.

The 2011 IBC, which was the 27th annual, was organized by The Blues Foundation. The Kentucky Blues Society sponsored Young’s entry in the competition.

Young and the band play every week at his own club, Tee Dee’s, at 266 E. Second.



The Fervor creep and build at Cosmic Charlie’s on the 21st.

Film & Media

One World Film Fest begins season #13

Local screenings focus on cultural issues

By Grayson Johnson

Now in its thirteenth year, Lexington’s own One World Film Festival is currently underway, showcasing recent movies that bring to light poignant cultural themes and ideas. “We’re not trying to hit you over the head with it,” laughs festival organizer Annette Mayer. “But, in a subtle way, in a pleasant way, to expand your knowledge.” The festival brings in both narrative and documentary films that highlight pressing social issues both in America and abroad. “Through film,” Mayer notes, “maybe we can understand cultural diversity.”

The festival was founded in 1999 by University of Kentucky Professor and Doctor of Medical Research Raj Chawla. A native of India and member of the Bluegrass Indian Society, Chawla had a passion for sharing his culture. In the mid-’90s, he even had a popular spot on WRFL—“Music from India” Through a national foundation called the Pew Civil Leadership Initiative, Chawla received a grant and an opportunity to share films that

depicted his and other cultures’ struggles, dreams, and ways of life with the people of Lexington.

Following the inaugural year of the festival, Chawla died unexpectedly, leaving big shoes to fill behind him. “I admit, I used to be the kind that grabbed a coke and popcorn and enjoyed the movie. Didn’t think too much,” Annette Mayer says. “I think about films completely differently now.” Sitting down with Mayer, one gets an immediate sense of the passion she has for each of the films selected for the festival. She goes through the program, pointing out each film and describing the characters, their daunting situations, and the story’s social relevance. “Some of the films don’t have a happy ending,” she warns, “but they increase knowledge about a cultural issue.”

Mayer worked for thirty-six years at Transylvania University, helms the Public Library’s Book Buddies program (which recruits volunteers to take books to homebound adults) and, in honor of her friend, decided to fill Chawla’s shoes. What started as a three day, three film festival now spans a

month and enriches packed theaters. Mayer puts it simply, saying she enjoys bringing “food to the mind”.

Fueling discussion

What makes the mind food of the One World Film Festival unique is that the film is only half of the experience. With each film, the festival brings in a local cultural or special interest group to whom the film is relevant to fuel discussion.

This past Sunday, the festival kicked off with Judith Ehrlich and Rick Goldsmith’s *The Most Dangerous Man in America: Daniel Ellsberg and the Pentagon Papers*, a documentary that takes a look at the leaked information which disclosed stark realities about President Nixon and the Vietnam war.

Between screenings, The UK Student Chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists held a reception with an open forum discussion about freedom of the press and free speech led by UK Journalism Professor Scoobie Ryan. The discussion was of particular interest and relevance due to

the current international controversy involving Wikileaks.

In the coming weeks, acclaimed documentary and narrative films will screen with receptions held by The Muslim Women’s Council of Kentucky, The Bluegrass Youth Ballet, the Bluegrass Beekeepers Association, and other organizations who have a bond with the cause or message of a particular film.

The One World Film Festival is free and open to the public. Screenings will occur beginning at 2 P.M. on Sundays (with a repeat at 4:30 for several of the screenings) at the Lexington Public Library Theater and at 5 P.M. and 7:30 P. at the Kentucky Theatre on Thursdays. The festival runs through March 17. Receptions will occur between screenings.

“There are a lot of big cities out there that don’t have something like this,” remarks Fred Mills, General Manager of the Kentucky Theater. “It’s really something special.”

For more information, including a list of films, please visit oneworldfilmfestival.org/.

Opening night at Harry Dean Stanton Fest

By Rebecca Fear

Lexington’s first Harry Dean Stanton Fest, inspired by Fairmount, Indiana’s annual tribute to James Dean, was quite a success. The festival celebrating actor Harry Dean Stanton, a Lafayette High School graduate, kicked off on Wednesday, February 2, with a documentary directed by Kentucky native Tom Thurman entitled *Harry Dean Stanton: Crossing Mulholland*.

The intimate State Theatre was nearly filled to the brim with all sorts of people, both old and young, and a good number of the actor’s cousins. Stanton himself had to send his regards, but there were other names in attendance. Hunter Carson, Stanton’s co-star in *Paris, Texas*, made an appearance on Wednesday night (Carson did a full Q&A following Thursday night’s screening of the 1984 film) as did classmate Bill Riley (Riley was the last person to see Stanton before he moved out to Hollywood and became a star).

In addition to Stanton friends and family, opening night co-host KET had a large presence at the Fest. *Harry Dean Stanton: Crossing Mulholland* was created as part of the public station’s Kentucky Muse series. On Wednesday night, staff members from the TV station generously passed out vouchers for free popcorn and drinks to everyone in attendance. KET began broadcasting the documentary on February 15, so if you missed the theatrical debut, you still have a chance to see it.



Tom Thurman answers questions following the screening of his documentary film Harry Dean Stanton: Crossing Mulholland.

The film itself is both amusing and insightful. Thurman’s list of on-screen interviews includes (among many others) singer Michelle Phillips, actors Richard Dreyfuss and Billy Bob Thornton, country music legends Kris Kristofferson and Dwight Yoakam, and several Stanton family members. Awkward humor abounds. A great deal of conversation centers on Stanton’s face, which is described as a “dust bowl face,” and perpetually looking 50 years old (from age 20 to his current 84).

One of Stanton’s cousins tells a story from his athletic days in high school. Word has it that Henry Clay and Lafayette were in a heated game of basketball, and it was down to the wire. Just as the free throw shooter on Henry Clay’s team tossed the ball to make the deciding point of the game, the arena went black. Stanton later confessed to his cousin that he had turned out the lights in favor of his alma mater, Lafayette.

Surprisingly enough, at 84 years old, Stanton still performs live music shows in California. “He sounds like he’s about to cry when he sings,” musician Michelle Phillips (of The Mamas & The Papas fame) observes. The

documentary plays up Stanton’s connections to music, showing him playing guitar, harmonica, and singing with a few different people.

Crossing Mulholland ends on an uplifting note that seemed to carry through to the entire evening and festival. After summing up Stanton’s life, Thurman concludes with a shot of the aging Kentucky actor, a beautiful view from Mulholland in the background, smoking a cigarette in front of a sign that reads “No Smoking or Fires.”

Director Tom Thurman spoke following Wednesday night’s screening of his documentary. In the process of completing other projects, Thurman had been compiling interviews with Stanton for 20 years, and with good reason. He claimed that in the multiple interviews he held with him, the actor never answered a single question. Thurman recounted a particularly funny set of Stanton evasions, describing how phone calls between Stanton and actor Marlon Brando were notorious for containing long pauses lasting up to thirty minutes, the result of both men attempting to “out Zen” each other.

Aside from details about the documentary and Stanton’s part in it, Thurman’s Q&A session also captured the actor’s essence. Most men have a mask over their emotions and express nothing but toughness. Harry Dean Stanton is not that way, Thurman observed, and that is one of the reasons Thurman finds him such a compelling actor. It never seems like he’s acting. He is just a genuine person.

Local film happenings

KET’s Community Cinema Series at the Lexington Public Library

Kentucky Educational Television, in association with Independent Lens, will host a screening of *Me Facing Life: Cyntoia’s Story* at the downtown branch of the Lexington Public Library on Thursday, February 17. The film, which is the latest installment in the Community Cinema Series, tells the story of a 16-year-old girl who is arrested and tried for the murder of a 43-year-old man. Over the course of six years, the film follows Cyntoia through the judicial process while seeking to discover—both culturally and biologically—the factors involved in creating her current situation. The screening will begin at 6 P.M. and is free and open to the public. Expect a discussion to follow. For more information, please visit www.ket.org/communitycinema/.

Bluegrass Film Society Screenings at BCTC

The Bluegrass Film Society (BFS) continues its 2011 Spring Semester with a series of challenging and thought-provoking films—all of which are free! This year’s programming boasts the addition of a Social Documentary Series as well as a Family Film Series. Most screenings are held in the Oswald Building Auditorium on the campus of Bluegrass Community and Technical College and all are open to the public. For a complete list of films and their showtimes, please visit dialogic.blogspot.com and do a search for “Bluegrass Film Society.” The series will run until April 20.

On Wednesday, February 23, BFS will show *The Cove* (USA: Louie Psihoyos, 2009: 92 mins), a hard hitting expose of an annual hidden massive roundup and slaughter of dolphins in a Japanese cove. The film won a 2010 Oscar for best documentary.

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Gallusser, Johansen win in frigid Ice Bowl

NoC Sports Desk

A few inches of snow and ice can make the tamest of tournaments seem tough. Combine the two with blustery, bitter cold winds and you’ve got a recipe for grueling disc golf. Such was the case February 5th when the Bluegrass Disc Golf Association (BDGA) held its fifth annual Lexington Ice Bowl.

The 36-hole tournament was played at the Shillito and Veteran’s Parks courses. It was a Professional Disc Golf Association (PDGA) sanctioned event, meaning pros from as far away as Tennessee and Ohio made the drive north and south to gain valuable points for their 2011 PDGA season.

The 71 tournament entrants came bundled up in stocking caps, thick coats and long johns to try and beat back the elements. A few managed to shoot under par, but most were doing all they could to stay warm between shots.

The first 35 pre-registered entrants received a BDGA disc and a mini marker. The cost was \$40 for the pro divisions, \$30 for the advanced, \$25 for the intermediate, recreational and novice and \$15 for the women’s and junior’s divisions.

More than a quarter of the tournament’s entrance fees went to charity. Another \$85 was raised in a throw off for a portable basket resulting in a check for \$800 going to God’s Pantry of Lexington.

Several of the tourney’s entrants netted some cash and killer merchandise as well. Each of the nine divisions closest to the pin winners won \$40 each. The top pro took home \$125, advanced \$55 in merch, intermediate \$70 in merch, recreational and novice \$50 of merch, women’s \$25 and \$20 of merchandise to the junior division.

The 40 mph wind gusts weren’t enough to keep two disc golfers from acing hole #9 at Veteran’s Park and hole #15 at Shillito. James Robinson shaped his drive perfectly to net a hole in one at Veteran’s with Cyrus Fuhrman matching his effort at Shillito.

“The cold wasn’t so bad,” said tournament organizer and BDGA president Drew Smith. “It was the wind that played a major factor.”

“The wind makes putting really hard,” he said. “Even 10 footers are tough. Heck, even 5 footers were tricky.”

When asked how the elements affected overall scores, Smith responded by saying, “When you have top rated players shooting in the 60s at an easier course like Shillito you know something’s up.”

Smith said what kept him alive was playing for pars (3’s), laying up and not running at the baskets.

“On hole #13 I started my drive too high and the wind lifted my disc some 50 feet into the air and into the bushes to the left,” he said, referring to his best shot of the day. “I tossed a roll out and parked it by the pin to save a 3.”

Up next for the BDGA is the WCCPR Frozen Iron Ice Bowl II on the 19th of this month. It will be held at the Iron Works Hill course in Winchester. To register for the tournament visit www.bdga.org.

After that the BDGA will be getting ready for the Lexington Open coming this May. There will be a few changes to this year’s format, with tournament play to be held at Shillito and Veteran’s Parks like previous years. In addition the Riney B course in Nicholasville will be added to the mix, making the tournament a 54-hole event.

In order to accommodate the addition of mountain bike trails in Veteran’s Park, several tees and baskets will be moved. The BDGA will also be adding several new signs on various holes. Check out the map provided for the changes being made.

Lexington Ice Bowl X • February 5, Veteran’s Park

Open

1. Eric Gallusser -11, 97
2. Cyrus Fuhrman -9, 99
3. Garrett Diehmier -4, 104

Masters

1. Allen Johansen -3, 105
2. James McCormick +2, 110
3. Darell Mottley +3, 111

Advanced

1. Zach Skees E, 108
2. Drew Smith +3, 111
3. Jerry Dobbins +5, 113

Advanced Masters

1. Tracy Crabtree +4, 112
2. Randall Roseman +6, 114
3. John Alfonso +8, 116

Intermediate

1. Michael Ohlman +1, 109
2. Rich Miller +3, 111
3. Ryan Betterman +5, 113

Intermediate Women

1. Brittany Shuman +39, 147
2. Lauren Yurt DNF

Recreational

1. Josh Stevens +8, 116
2. Kevin Maxfield +9, 117
3. Toby Greshaw +12, 120

Novice

1. Sam Hall +10, 118
2. Adam Naumann +19, 127
3. Joe Garrison +20, 128

Junior (under 13 boys)

1. Austin Dobbins +41, 149
2. Andrew Boylan +49, 157



Proposed changes to the disc golf course at Veteran’s Park. Image courtesy Bluegrass Disc Golf Association.

Rupp renovations (cont.)

continued from page 3

city could partner with the Triangle Park foundation (themselves wealthy, private business leaders with interests in the area) to re-design Triangle Park into a world-class park.

No specific figures were given, but the author acknowledged that great amounts of public and private money would be needed, not to mention the intellectual labor inputs needed to change zoning laws and coordinate the sprawling amount of partnerships imagined. Elsewhere the *Herald-Leader* has enthusiastically wondered whether “Lexington can capitalize on Wildcat fans’ arena envy, sparked by Louisville’s KFC Yum Center” (“Mayor outlines sensible approaches,” Jan 27).

Left unacknowledged by Gray

and both *HL* editorials is the fact that Rupp is already located next to a sports/arts/cultural area called Victorian Square (the 1980s urban project to save the city). In addition, within the past year Lexington leaders have invested great sums of money to create an arts/culture/community district much closer to Rupp than the nearby Distillery District: Cheapside. For those who’ve forgotten about last year’s urban project to save the city, Cheapside is located less than a quarter mile away from Rupp and has already received several million dollars in site design. It has also been hailed (before the Rupp arts/sports district talk) as a central city gathering place, a home for the farmer’s market and Thursday Night Live, a place to go for good food and drinks.

With all sides acknowledging that city hall has limited funds, with the mayor looking to cut costs in the operation of city government to balance budget shortfalls, the new Gray administration’s big-ticket, potentially big-vision item proposal has focused thus far on developing an arts/drinking/cultural district, what, 3-5 blocks from Jim Newberry’s arts/drinking/cultural district? It may be a win for downtown, but it certainly does not seem like a good investment for city residents. They can be expected to foot the bill, go in greater civic debt, for yet another downtown project catering to urban creative class leisure, a project that will, by fact of its central downtown location, prove significantly more costly than construction/design projects located anywhere else in town.

Opinion

City leaders: which side are you on? Lee Todd? Jim Gray? Coach Coal?

As individuals commonly identified throughout the state and nation as leaders who reside in this city, we demand better leadership of UK President Lee Todd, UK Basketball Coach John Calipari and Lexington Mayor Jim Gray. We want to know, when it comes to mountaintop removal, which side are you on? What are your thoughts about the past week-end’s much-publicized civil disobedience in Frankfort?

Eastern Kentucky coal has a long and deep relationship to this state and its citizens. This is particularly true for our city of Lexington, which continues to operate as the western gateway to Eastern Kentucky.

This was true in the 1700s when men rafted lumber ripped from old growth Eastern Kentucky Appalachian forests down the Kentucky River and around the fertile peninsula of inner-bluegrass lands, which Lexington commanded, profitably, from 40 miles inland. It was true in the 1800s when barges transported iron ore and coal from the Red River onto the Kentucky, providing cheap and efficient heat for Lexington’s growing cityscape (now revered by progressive preservationists). And it remains true today, as Lexingtonians trade their hospitals and outlet malls for cheap energy and the plentiful coal-spoiled waters of the Kentucky River, both of which headwater in Eastern Kentucky.

Mountaintop removal is not simply an Eastern Kentucky problem whose solution requires intervention in Frankfort. MTR in Eastern Kentucky is also a Lexington problem, a UK problem, a democracy

problem. The list goes on. We are not separate from what happens 40 miles to our east.

We at this paper have spent a great deal of time these past two years tracking local discussions over that elusive quality, leadership, and what it means to Lexington. Todd, Gray and Calipari have featured prominently in those discussions, nearly always in glowing terms. The UK Board of Trustees has cited strong leadership as justification for CEO Todd’s wage increases, which totaled \$400,000 in just the past two years.

Lexington Mayor Jim Gray, newly swept into office, owes much to his reputation as a person skilled at cultivating and stewarding creative leadership from below. Certainly UK men’s basketball coach John Calipari’s leadership skills are given great credit in his turning around the team from the rudderless ship of Billy Gillespie.

Our request is simple. We ask that you tend to your well-paid and powerful positions as city and state leaders: provide leadership on MTR. Speak.

The argument can, and probably will, be made that what has taken place in Frankfort has nothing to do with Lexington, the University of Kentucky, or its basketball team. The implication of this line of thought inevitably results in calls for restraint, a need for a university president, or a basketball coach or city mayor, to shut up and stay the hell out of the way of “the problem.” To not bud in.

We don’t buy the separate spheres argument, nor do we agree with its implication, that being silent on matters of great importance constitutes leadership.

In a leadership role, UK president Lee Todd has shown an interest in speaking up for students. Within the past 2 months, Todd has publicly defended the right of basketball recruit Enes Kanter, for example, to remain eligible to play basketball at UK. Todd did this, in part, on grounds that young Kanter, who had played basketball professionally in Turkey for three years prior to matriculating here, deserved a UK education.

Todd has not shown the same care and concern for Kanter’s fellow student, UK Physics graduate student Martin Mudd, one of the 14 citizens holed up in the capital building. He also has not extended the same interest to the *Kentucky Kernel* journalists who embedded at the capital to cover the historic protests. Neither has Todd commented on Erik Reece, a UK writer in residence who also featured prominently in the act of civil disobedience, or Jason Howard, another graduate student who has played important behind the scenes work as a media relations point person.

An ambassador for the university, why has Todd remained silent in the face of these highly publicized engaged civic acts? Does advocating for a 17 year old one-and-done professional basketball player from Turkey really trump speaking out for a group of long-time university students (and Kentucky citizens) engaged in the practice of civil democracy—people whose concerns precisely address the Kentucky Ugliest of poverty, poor health and unemployment that Todd has harped on (to the benefit of his salary) these past 10 years?

We don’t want to just single out Todd. Mayor Gray has talked

openly—been a leader—in looking 60 miles west and embracing Louisville as a meaningful neighbor, but he has yet to look east the same distance.

Coach Coal will soon house his entire basketball team in a coal dorm, paid for in part by Luther Deaton, chairman at Central Bank. The same bank partially funds Coach Coal’s multi-million dollar salary by purchasing an advertising package with UK athletics to have the elite-eight finishing coach featured in a number of Central Bank ads.

These city leaders are not untouched by coal and the protests taking place in Frankfort. They are not exempt from having to offer reasons for their actions.

As we understand the term, leaders hold strongly to beliefs and take public actions that inspire and compel others to act in a common good. This definition of leadership compels leaders into the free market of public action. They must take stances; they must convince an interested public—followers—as a precondition of becoming leaders. Leadership is not declared, salaried, diploma’d, militia’d or termed. It is simply a function of action, commitment and communication. Anyone can do it.

Let’s not fool ourselves into thinking that Governor Beshear is the only person needing to talk MTR openly. Todd, Gray and Calipari—some of our communities’ leaders—collect paychecks that derive chiefly from the assumption that they operate as city and state leaders. We demand they fulfill their definitional and contractual obligations of being important regional leaders.

Justice for Palestine

By Ryan Smith

In recent years a shift has occurred in the debate over Middle East peace. A growing number of citizens in the United States and abroad are becoming increasingly aware of the injustices routinely carried out against Palestinians. Though these gains are a positive sign, more awareness and action is needed to achieve anything close to justice for Palestine.

During President Obama’s first year in office, he has taken criticism from the right and the left over his “harsh stance” on Israel, mostly in reference to the lip service the president has given to halting Israeli annexation of the Palestinian West Bank. This is misleadingly called “Israeli settlement construction” in the media, and it has involved Israel continuously constructing new settlements beyond the 1967 internationally recognized border with the Palestinian West Bank. In the process, Israeli settlements have expropriated valuable Palestinian lands with vital water resources. For Palestinians, these lands are vital to agriculture and survival.

Every U.S. administration involved has not only looked the other way, but provided the resources to ensure Israel can continue, and Barack Obama has been no exception. Let us consider how “harsh” President Obama has been on Israel’s conduct. According to Noam Chomsky’s *Hopes and Prospects*, in then candidate Obama’s speech to the American Israeli Public Affairs Committee, Obama went beyond even Bush commitments to Israel saying, “Jerusalem will remain the capital of Israel, and it will remain undivided.” This statement, as Chomsky points out, had campaign personnel scrambling to claim it was taken out of context: Israeli encroachment into East Jerusalem has been a central barrier to resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Chomsky has also detailed Obama’s duplicity in regards to international humanitarian law as it applies

to Israel. When the terror attacks on Mumbai, India occurred shortly after the 2008 election, the President-elect rightly condemned the attacks and the “hateful ideology” behind it. However, when Israel attacked the Gaza Strip about a month later, the President-elect’s stance was “there is only one president at a time.” While the Mumbai attacks were horrific, with more than 160 people killed and over 300 injured in one night of violence, the Israeli assault on Gaza claimed more than a thousand lives in little less than a month. Both incidents were in full breach of international humanitarian law. Research by groups on the ground in Gaza after the assault suggest that, amongst other munitions obtained from the United States, the Israelis used white phosphorus chemical weaponry. This put the nation President Obama inherited in direct violation of international humanitarian law. And yet, to date there is no signal Obama has intentions of altering the status quo of U.S.-Israeli relations.

Another striking example of neglect for Palestinian rights lies within the U.S.-Israeli rejection of the 2006 Palestinian elections. Leading up to the elections Bush administration officials lauded the elections as progress towards a peaceful two state solution. Despite the U.S.-preferred candidate Mahmoud Abbas’ victory as Prime Minister, the militant faction Hamas won a majority seats in parliament to the dismay of Washington. The United States and Israel rejected the elections as illegitimate, despite the approval of a non-partisan election supervising agency established by Jimmy Carter.

The two countries, Israel and the U.S., did not dismiss the elections on grounds of corruption. In fact, no real reason was given other than Hamas was not an acceptable choice in the supposed free Palestinian elections. This is a blatant example of the U.S. policy of rejecting any political action, democratic or not, that does not conform to U.S. government intentions. President Obama’s rhetoric on Middle

East peace has not suggested he’s willing to break from standard U.S. policy here either.

One must take a sober look at the role Israel has played in global affairs since its inception in 1948. Right on the edge of the world’s largest energy resource rich region, Israel has served as a base of U.S. power and influence. Particularly since Israel’s 1967 and 1973 wars, during which Israel adopted an expansionist policy, the United States has worked closely with Israel on expansionary military and intelligence operations, not to mention the work it has done maintaining a virtual police state in the Gaza Strip. All this has been made possible by the more than \$3 billion in economic aid, along with billions in military equipment or logistical support, that the U.S. provides in a given year. This puts not only Israel, but also the United States, in consistent violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The time is now that we ask a significant question; are the costs to the U.S.-Israeli relationship worth the benefits? Arabs see the U.S. as enablers and supporters of Israeli actions, both legal and illegal. This fuels global jihad. U.S. foreign policy is actually causing our biggest foreign policy challenge. By disengaging from occupying lands where the population does not want our presence, we can defuse tensions with would be combatants, while saving billions in maintenance and personnel costs to maintain that presence. By encouraging Israel to do the same thing in the Palestinian West Bank and Gaza Strip, which is the overwhelming international consensus, the U.S. would be showing the world a commitment to Palestinian rights and sovereignty, and to Israeli disengagement. This would take the proverbial wind from the sails of global jihad, not to mention open diplomatic doors with Iran, who says it will accept any agreement the Palestinians accept.

If all of these events take place, it could open the possibility of negotiating a desperately needed Nuclear

Weapons Free Zone in the Middle East and elsewhere. The NWFZ is accepted by every country in the region, including Iran; however it has been consistently opposed by Israel and the United States. All of these steps are not only a roadmap to Palestinian justice, but Israeli-Palestinian peace, and global peace. We must stay vigilant on the Obama administration, let them know where you stand on this issue, it could mean so much.

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

Editor & Publisher
Danny Mayer

Features
Beth Connors-Manke

Film & Media
Lucy Jones

Sports
Troy Lyle

Design
Keith Halladay

Illustrations
Noah Adler

Contributors
Michael Benton
Andrew Battista
Kenn Minter
Captain Commankers
Stan Heaton
Tim Staley
Patrice Morgan
Kayla Thomas

Please address correspondence, including advertising inquiries and letters to the editor, to:
noceditors@yahoo.com.

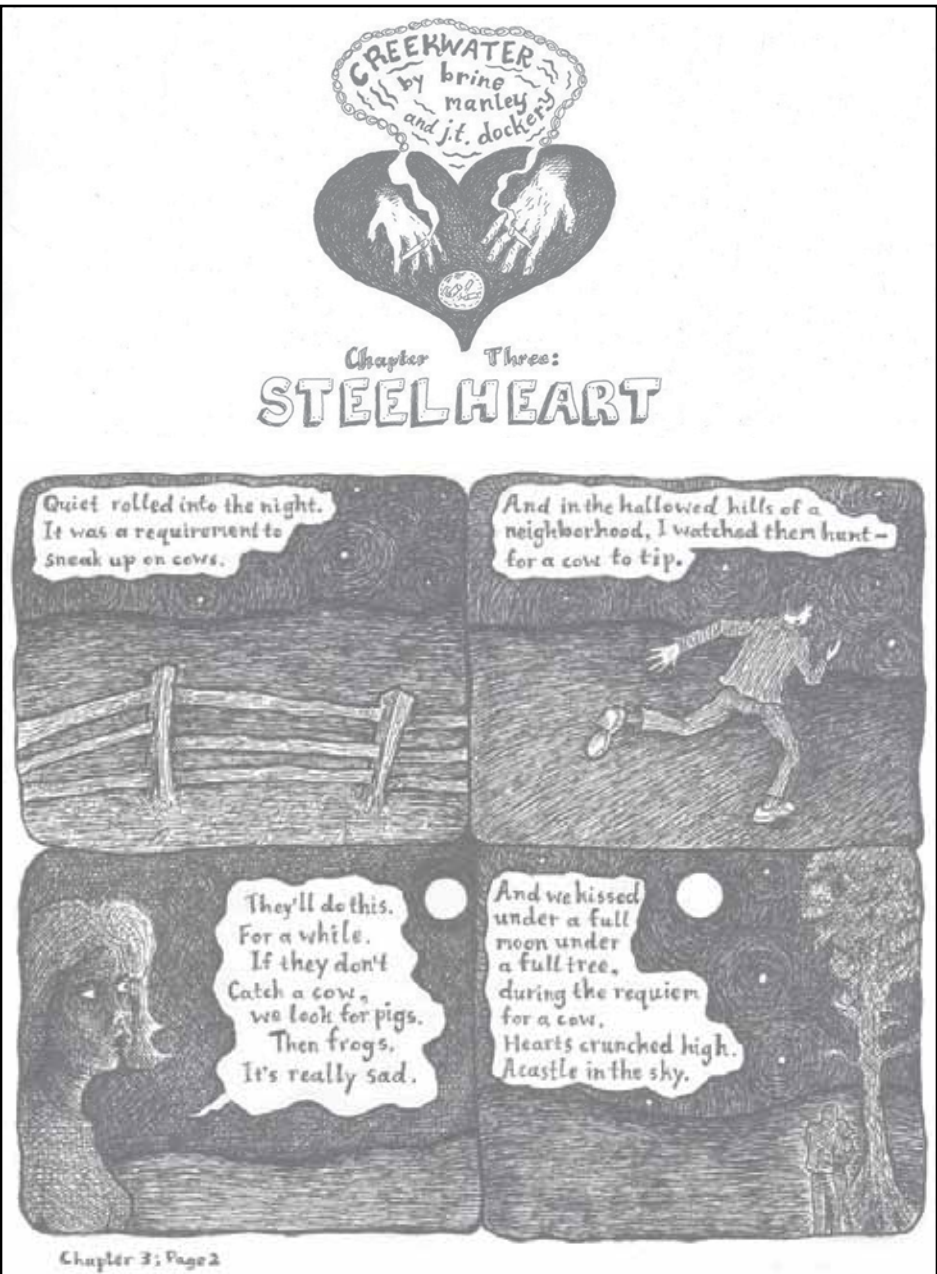
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Creekwater

Brine Manley & J.T. Dockery



Delmar von Lexington

Dylan Blount

McKenna Du Freak

