

Life as a migrant worker

Our man in Amsterdam

By Michael Marchman

It's been a year since my partner, Stephanie, and I became international migrant workers. We moved to the Netherlands from Lexington last January after Stephanie was offered a two-year research fellowship at the University of Amsterdam. We were excited by the opportunity and not a little bit relieved. Stephanie had just completed her PhD and had been looking, unsuccessfully, for a job for over a year. And several months earlier, due to budget cuts and restructuring, I lost the teaching job that I'd had for four years at Northern Kentucky University.

As an adjunct instructor working on a year-to-year contract with limited benefits, I was well aware of the precarious state of my employment. I knew that it could dry up at any moment. But being aware of your own economic insecurity doesn't make it any easier to deal with the sudden loss of your job. So when my contract was not renewed after my fourth year at NKU, I found myself suddenly unemployed. To make matters worse, since I'd been hired on a fixed short-term contract (as so many of us working in higher education are these days) I wasn't technically fired or laid off—my contract was simply allowed to expire. As a result, I wasn't eligible for unemployment benefits.

For the previous couple of summers, I'd worked as an assistant to a local carpenter doing restoration and remodeling



"People before profits." Photo by Michael Marchman.

work to make ends meet. When I lost my job at NKU my carpenter boss—one of the finest human beings I've ever had the pleasure of knowing—offered me full-time work. I was grateful and thoroughly enjoyed the work. The friendship that I developed with him and my other co-worker are among the most treasured I've ever had. I wouldn't trade the time I spent working with them for anything. In fact, I would have enjoyed continuing to work with them, but at \$11 an hour with no insurance and massive debts to pay off, it was destined to be temporary.

With insufficient incomes, unstable employment, a horrendous job market, and a mountain of credit card and

student loan debt gnawing holes in the linings of our stomachs, Stephanie and I struggled to control our anxiety.

Flight to Amsterdam

So when Stephanie was offered the job in Amsterdam, giving at least one of us a decent salary, not to mention the chance to live in Europe for a couple of years, we jumped at the opportunity. Despite real uncertainty about our ability to survive economically in Amsterdam—I didn't have a job and her income alone wouldn't be enough for us to survive on for long—we decided to

continued on page 6

Studying corporate history

Citizens United two years later

By Joy Arnold

Two years ago, I wrote an article for *NoC* about the then-new decision from the Supreme Court, *Citizens United vs. Federal Election Commission*, which removed all spending restraints on corporations regarding campaign finance. At that time, *NoC* readers knew what I was writing about, but if I went much deeper into the population, I got glazed-over stares.

Citizens United was far from the beginning of corporate dominance of our politics and government. The irony is, though it hasn't always been this way, this has been going on for a long time. Piece by piece, right by right, corporations, with their limitless wealth, have hammered at the courts in order to accumulate every right they need to gain *carte blanche*—regardless of the cost to the environment or the price in human health and well being.

The case woke us to the fact that the so-called "precedent" on which the courts have been building a person of a corporation was in itself a fiction. The "precedent" was found in a headnote of an 1886 case—a headnote that was the work of the clerk of the Court, a former railroad executive.

The 2010 *Citizens United* decision further relaxed campaign finance law, allowing corporations and wealthy individuals to pour millions of dollars into the campaign coffers of political candidates. Consequently, out of fear that the dollars will go to the opposition, incumbent political leaders vote on issues not for the public good, but for the good of those who paid for their campaigns. Then, Congress members allow industry representatives to write regulations that protect corporate interests, not our air, water, and safety.

Yet we hear corporations crying: "There are too many regulations!"

Who saw it?

In the two years since the *Citizens United* decision, a grass roots awakening has begun. As the Occupy Movement sprung up, a broader spectrum of people also came to realize that, indeed, corporations are *not* people and to ascribe to them rights intended for natural persons is a fraud of the most disastrous kind. As we peel away the layers of the contrivance that corporate entities should be granted legal personhood, we're seeing that most of us have paid no attention to the historic thread of corporate takeover of our government.

Not everyone was blind to this, though. Long before the 2010 decision, activists, corporate critics, and political analysts like Thom

continued on page 6

Abandoned channels: Elkhorn Creek to Lockport

By Wesley Houp

To say a river is a living system is a scientific truism that even the most scientifically uninitiated intellect can grasp with minimal cognitive stretching: rivers teem with life, from unicellular diatoms to aquatic invertebrates and on up to vertebrata, fish, amphibian, avian, mammalian. Watersheds branch like trees, only their life-force moves in reverse from tiniest green-shoot to broad trunk, the faintest spring or rill gaining momentum, joining forces with other rivulets, debouching into larger creeks that eventually embolden the flow of master streams. Geologists, taking the long view of things, give rivers human-like agency, noting how they "capture" and "pirate" this or that watershed, or "desert" and "abandon" this or that channel, ever insisting on a course of least resistance. Rivers, like so much of life on earth, adapt to physiographic vagaries and persist through course of time as if accumulating the knowledge of experience.

But to say a river is alive, animated by a sort of conscious but unknowable will is not so easily grasped, particularly by those who have spent little time bankside or adrift on one. What is this consciousness but the pull of gravity, the swell of storm-water, and the turbulence of headwinds? What is it but cold, blind nudgings of fish barbels along some deep ledge? Perhaps the bioturbations of gastropods inching through fine-silted shallows and eddies, or the plashing of kingfishers and the winging acrobatics



Lock 3 is nearly topped by the Kentucky River, which ran at 16.5 feet on the Lockport gauge. Photo by Wes Houp.

of thirsty bank swallows? Certainly it is these things. But certainly it is something else, particularly with a river as old as the Kentucky, whose origin reaches back to the far cusp of the Mesozoic world (perhaps even into Paleozoic time), whose waters were flowing a northwesterly course when giant reptiles held dominion, and later when large mammals, long of tooth, tusk, and trunk, grazed on grass of the rolling, featureless peneplains. The Kentucky, whose deeply entrenched meanders appeared to prehistoric nomads precisely as they appear to us today, is witness to hundreds of millions of years of earth's evolution and, barring cosmic cataclysm, shall be

witness to hundreds of millions more.

Now having paddled nearly the entire mainstream of the Kentucky, in all weathers, in every season, I can say with surety the river is a living system, governed by immutable geologic laws, and the river is alive—a singular entity that breaths and speaks a language all its own, perhaps the oldest tongue on earth—words we never knew for things long vanished, for things yet to come long after we, ourselves, have vanished. We catch the utterances in bits and pieces, like children overhearing hushed conversation between parents in the

continued on page 5

Contents

2—Neighborhood

Onassis art
Discarded
Yoking our streets
Not the norm

4—Region

The legacy of 1199

7—Opinion

Santorum's liberties

8—Comics

I'm Not From Here
Lexington Public
Salubrious Soup

Coming soon

Trip to Severn Creek

Ladies Army IV preview

*F**k U-Scan*

The Neighborhood

Skolnick’s Jackie O’s

By Barbara Goldman

Almost daily throughout the fall and finishing this January, Lexington artist Aaron Skolnick recreated the same image of former American First Lady Jacqueline Onassis Kennedy, known more popularly as Jackie O. The images, 55 of them, which all depict Onassis at the time of her husband John F. Kennedy’s assassination in Dealey Plaza, Dallas Texas, were the result of Skolnick’s daily artistic exercises that included physical constraints, time limits, and drawing the image from memory.

Although the pieces travel through a series of styles and mediums that grew from the artist’s daily exercises, they stay true to the original iconic image: the former first lady, adorned in her signature pink suit and hat, white glove in front of her mouth. Each piece spotlights different facial elements visible at different times.

Sexuality/Fragility

Skolnick admits that it has been a challenge to take someone like Onassis who has been done so many times and to present her in a meaningful way.

“I loved these images because they are such ambiguously strong images for a man to draw. I also think it’s interesting for a gay man to draw a woman over and over again and have no sexual attraction to her. I really had to think of the power of image. I wanted to avoid shock value.”

Skolnick explains that the idea for the Jackie O’s came out of a project he worked on for a show this summer. In it, he recreated the image of JFK on the autopsy table after the assassination. The pieces were larger than life and depicted at irregular angles.

“I was concentrating on objectivity and the idea of contemporary sexuality, the desire of the flesh. It created a weird friction not wanting to be someone else

who replicates the American dream, if that does exist.”

When Skolnick moved away from the autopsy table to fix his gaze on Onassis, similar themes emerged. “I wanted to recreate this moment that everyone purges themselves from. Jackie O became an idol after her husband died. Would she or JFK have been such idols if he hadn’t died? I wanted to take that moment and draw it, [this] desire to be someone in a position we all purge ourselves from.”

Skolnick’s Jackie O’s pull you in for a few brief moments to the emotion that she may have felt while playing her American role—a rare act in itself seeing as how Onassis nearly always appeared cool, vibrant, and collected.

“In such a fragile state she held her composure. She maintained that idea of beauty and understood what she had to be. “

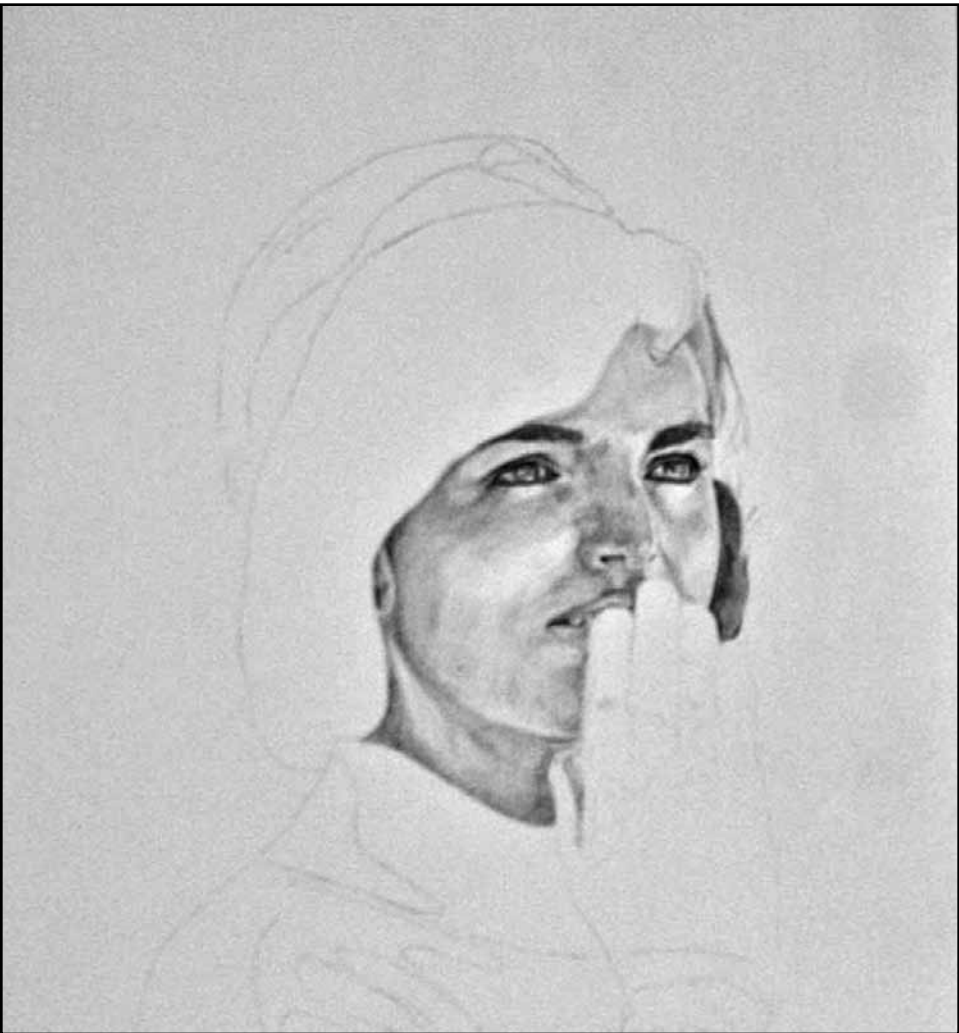
Work can be aware of itself

For Skolnick, some of the pieces really want to repeat that idea of beauty. When he first began the daily exercises from which the Jackie O pieces are drawn, the images were mostly tight and vivid. Things gradually loosened. Blurry watercolor images resembled blow up dolls, resin encased line figures, and graphite appeared to fill backgrounds.

“Work can be aware of itself,” he says, and so all fifty-five pieces, all in white frames with white backgrounds, are meant for display side by side. The inspiration comes from Andy Warhol.

“Presentation has a lot to do with my work. Repetition always breaks up intimacy. But the frame makes them more intimate. It creates an awkward tension.”

Skolnick continues with the thought. “Some of these I don’t really like at all, and would never buy without seeing the others. You start making some images you even hate sometimes.



One of the 55 Onassis images. Photo by Aaron Skolnick.

Some work as background pieces elegantly framed, they are beautiful, but easy to pass up because they fit into the background.”

The intended effect is to take the viewer through an additional journey of art history, from Warhol and Shultz to Toyman.

“Some people don’t like giving their references, but I really like the idea of us being really aware of where we came from.”

It’s that sense of history, of embracing a past, that has drawn Skolnick local fans like Lexington mayor Jim Gray. “Remarkable artists are like remarkable

people,” Gray observes about Skolnick’s development as an artist. “They don’t spring up full-grown overnight. It takes native talent, of course, then curiosity and the will to go against the grain; and big doses of discipline and commitment, and charisma, too. Aaron is meeting all those hurdles.”

Skolnick is still raising funds to pay for framing each piece, though he hopes to be ready within the next six months. He is also interested in showing a few of the pieces at a time. For more information visit [aaronkolnick.com](mailto:aaronkolnick@yahoo.com) or email aaronkolnick@yahoo.com.

Mick, corner of Campsie and Fourth



MICK / CORNER OF CAMPSIE PLACE AND FOURTH STREET

12.6.10 / 4:48 PM / 22° F

We were not surprised to see Mick open the door of the house to which a neighbor directed us after hearing our strange request. She said that she would not sit on the discarded couch but that the people who lived a few houses down from her would most likely be game.

Earlier that day, Mick had spent time thinking about how he could get rid of a couch he and his wife owned. Because they didn’t want to move the heavy, hide-a-bed on their own and because they like to support the Catholic Action Center, they decided to give it to them. In any case, Mick steeped outside in 22 degree weather even before we told him why we needed him to come with us to the curb.

Image and text by Kurt Gohde and Kremena Todorova, Discarded project.

“The 2000 Yoke Analysis deals a devastating blow to any plans to close the Vine Street curve to extend Triangle Park to the Civic Center.”

MARCH 2012

The Vine Street Yoke

By David Shattuck

The proposed Rupp Arena Opportunity Zone presents an opportunity to revisit an issue dear to developers: the closure of the Vine Street curve to extend Triangle Park across Vine Street to connect directly with the Civic Center. This idea was first floated in 2000; that same year Third and Fourth Streets were converted from one-way to two-way traffic. During the summer of 2001, the Urban County Council voted 13-2 to close the Vine Street curve and to make certain one-way streets two-way, an action which Lexington businessman Warren Rosenthal called “very, very stupid.” An outcry over the vote led the Council to hear public comments on the proposal at its next scheduled meeting. About 50 citizens, myself included, showed up to speak against the proposal. Prior to the meeting, however, as we gathered in the hallway, it was announced that the Council intended to reverse its vote. It was our understanding that this was done in order to determine whether a traffic study would support the plan. [I’ve added the clause to make it fit with the term “It was OUR understanding...”]

It wasn’t until 2009, however, in response to an open records request, that I discovered that a traffic study had been conducted back in December 2000. This study, captioned “Closure of the Vine Street Yoke Traffic Analysis,” was prepared by the same firm, Entran, that would later conduct the Lexington Traffic Study in 2007 that failed to support the recommendation that downtown’s one-way streets be converted to two-way traffic. Like its later cousin, the 2000 Vine Street Yoke study demonstrates persuasively that closure of Vine at the curve would result in unacceptable peak-hour traffic congestion.

Vine Street Yoke

The 2000 study analyzed five scenarios involving removal of the yoke and various combinations of two-way street conversions. Significantly, in each scenario Short is retained as a one-way street (though now Short and Second are the first streets planners aim

to convert) in order to accommodate eastbound traffic. The Study explains that “approximately 15,500 vehicles per day are currently using the Vine St. Yoke. This section of Vine St. is one of the heaviest traveled streets within the downtown network. The Vine St. Yoke currently consists of four through lanes. Vine St. serves as the major eastbound street within the downtown system, carrying vehicles from Newtown Pike and Leestown Rd. into the downtown.”

The study continues: “When the Vine St. Yoke is closed, there are two important questions that need to be answered: (1) Where do the 15,500 vehicles now using the Yoke redistribute to, and (2) What are the impacts of that redistribution?” The study notes that “70% of the traffic that is using the Vine St. Yoke is currently destined to locations south of Main St. The remaining 30% is destined to areas such as Midland and East Main Street.” The study notes that “[t]raditionally, traffic volumes have increased 0.5% to 1% per year within the downtown area.”

Five options and an addendum

Scenario 1, which removes the Yoke and makes Main Street two-way to Broadway, redistributes 7,000 vehicles daily to Short Street, and results in a 40% increase in the time needed to travel down Main from Rose to Broadway. Option 2 takes Scenario 1 and also reverses the direction of High and Maxwell, which “did not provide a significant decrease in delay on Main St. when compared with Option 1.”

Option 3 is the most interesting of all the scenarios studied, because it takes Option 2 and further assumes completion of Newtown Pike to Versailles Road, a project that has only recently been completed. As I wrote in *Business Lexington* in spring of 2007, the Newtown extension is unlikely to play a significant role in reducing congestion on Main/Vine and Maxwell/High that would ensue with two-way traffic, since these pairs run in an east-west direction while Newtown runs north/south. The Yoke Analysis predicted as much: even reversing the direction of High and Maxwell, extending Newtown to

Maxwell results in the same overall delay on Main Street as Option 2—35%. Indeed, careful observers should know by now that extension of Newtown has had no material impact on downtown traffic.

Scenario 4 removes the Yoke, two-ways Main to Broadway, reverses the direction of High Street, converts Vine and Maxwell to two-way traffic, and assumes an extension of Newtown Pike to Limestone. While the model predicts that this option results in unacceptable congestion only on Maxwell Street (a prediction that I dispute for a variety of reasons), the study cautions: “It is important to note that Newtown Pike Extended has not yet entered the preliminary engineering and environmental investigation phase. The construction of Newtown Pike to Limestone is still a minimum of 8 years from completion.”

Option 5 removes the Yoke, two-ways Main to Broadway, converts High and Maxwell to two-way traffic, and allows for a left turn from southbound Broadway onto Vine Street. The model makes two significant predictions under this scenario. First, traffic volume on Vine remains at the same volume prior to removal of the Yoke—10,000 vehicles daily. “The 10,000 vehicles turning left create a tremendous strain on the Vine St. and Broadway intersection as well as the intersections at Broadway and High St. and Broadway and Main Street.” Second, the conversion of High and Maxwell to two-way traffic results in unacceptable traffic congestion.

The Yoke Analysis concludes that under each scenario except option

4—where Newtown is extended all the way to Limestone—“it becomes apparent that there does need to be a direct connection to Vine St. for eastbound traffic.” Accordingly, the Analysis contains an Addendum dated February 2001 which analyzes Option 6—remove the Yoke, make Main two-way to Upper Street, and make Vine two-way to between Broadway and Limestone.

The study explains that if Main Street is converted to two-way between Broadway and Upper, then Vine must also be converted to two-way to Limestone in order to help ease congestion on Main. Under this scenario Vine still carries approximately 80% of its original volume eastbound to Limestone, or some 8,000 vehicles (as measured in the year 2000). The model predicts that this option “will not improve traffic flow in downtown, however it will function.” In order to function, though, “several left turn limitations will need to be imposed on Main Street.” In addition, converting Main to two-way traffic “will require the removal of some curb and other construction.”

Drawing conclusions

What is the upshot of all of this? Obviously, the 2000 Yoke Analysis deals a devastating blow to any plans to close the Vine Street curve in order to extend Triangle Park to the Civic Center. Whatever merit the idea may have in terms of making the park more attractive, allowing for sidewalk cafes and retail opportunities, the simple fact

continued on page 7

Winter fun is hard on the back!

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Undressing normal

By Ellen Deatrick

The Undressing Normal: (Un)conference on Sexuality for Those of Us DisLabeled took place February 10 at the Clarion Hotel in Lexington. Roughly 70 people attended—a diverse group sharing at least one purpose: they wanted to talk. Or should I say “we,” since I was one of the attendees, eager to engage.

In preparing to cover this event, I had someone ask me: “So is this going to be like an unarticle?” I thought about how an “unarticle” would look. One of the guiding principles of an unconference is: “whatever happens is the only thing that could have.” I like it. Yes, this will be an unarticle.

Six months ago, a steering committee met—that is, what became a committee. Then, it was simply a concerned group of Kentuckians. Latitude Artist Community led the synergy, sparked by the summer incident in Hazard County and looking to extend discussion on issues surrounding sexuality, disability, and gender identity. Back in June, two gay men with intellectual disabilities were forced from a Hazard community pool for what some deemed excessive displays of affection. While all parties involved appropriately resolved the situation, the events highlighted how few resources are available for educating disability caregivers on sexual matters, notably on LGBT support. Co-owner of Latitude Bruce Burris flatly stated: “Since we’re accepting the idea—finally—that sexuality is, most people would agree, a normal part of life, it is about time that we should start talking

about this.”

The Human Development Institute (HDI) at the University of Kentucky jumped on board, feeling such a discussion aligned with their core mission. Kathy Sheppard-Jones, faculty member and training director with HDI, elaborated: “We really seek to enhance opportunities for people with disabilities across the lifespan, and the whole notion of sexuality is such an inherent part of who everyone is.”

The Nursing Home Ombudsman Agency of the Bluegrass also wanted in. As advocates for adults in long-term care, they were struck by the National Senior Citizen Law Center’s recent publication “LGBT Older Adults in Long-Term Care Facilities: Stories from the Field.” One story details a lesbian couple who, after moving to an assisted living facility, felt the need to hide their life-long identities out of fear. Feeling this fear unacceptable, state long-term care Ombudsman Kimberly Baker reported: “We’ve picked it up as one of our priority issues this year in the Ombudsman program.” ProgressLEX, a grassroots non-profit devoted to community betterment, brought unconference experience to the group. Having held successful unconferences a few years back, they lent their support advancing dialogue with this method.

So with a mishmash of motivations, the unconference took root, and became much more than probably anyone anticipated.

An unconference

Now, what’s with the “un” in front of conference? It’s not exactly the antithesis

of a conference, as one might imagine. It is designed to bring people together, but perhaps with more opportunity for engaging conversation and continuing action than what might stem from a typical conference. Unconferences have been gaining momentum since skeptical critiques by national news source such as National Public Radio’s “Marketplace” (in 2008, they portrayed the format as groundless, unorganized, jargony, and ultimately ineffectual). Hailing from technology sectors in the Silicon Valley, the unconference has marched across the country and landed in Kentucky—now tackling a more basic, yet certainly as elusive topic as technology: sexuality.

The unconference design, while not altogether new to Lexington, is progressive in and of itself—fitting for issues outside mainstream dialogue. No experts, no agendas—the day is instead a product of all the attendees. It advances from an initial blog site to the actual event, where each participant is encouraged to suggest, and even lead, break-out sessions that interest them. The unconference then, theoretically, continues on the blog, Facebook pages, and e-mail groups long after.

Our unconference began on February 10 with everyone sitting face-to-face in a circle. For all but one of us, this was our first unconference. The circle consisted of straight, gay, lesbian, and transgender persons—some that considered themselves “dislabeled” and some that probably had never given much thought to their societal labels. Along with the group sponsors, representatives of social services agencies, rehabilitative specialists, parents and guardians,

and concerned citizens rounded out the assembly.

Bev Harp, a graduate student of the HDI, opened with an invitation for us to get uncomfortable together. She stressed that we—perhaps insinuating more than just the immediate circle—needed discomfort. Ironically, as Sheppard-Jones reflected on that moment, she recalled: “Literally within the first fifteen minutes of that opening session, I felt the whole room sort of breathe a sigh of relief.”

Certainly, while our goal may have been to be uncomfortable (and I would say we often were), there was a notable communal trust from the beginning. People spoke up—it was a safe environment to do so.

Candor is key in an unarticle: never having attended an unconference, I’ll admit I doubted the format’s idealism. But it really was what Sheppard-Jones called an “equalizer,” and either because of this, or by some other surge of electricity, everyone exercised their voice. I was amazed by how much each individual contributed. Hence our shared purpose I alluded to earlier: we wanted to talk. I, the initial skeptic, must attribute the quality and prolificacy of the conversations to the open atmosphere of the unconference.

Everything from “Boundaries and parameters of guardians and families concerning issues of sexuality” to “How to get a boyfriend/girlfriend” materialized on the agenda wall, as individuals scribbled their concerns on paper and affixed them to the day’s schedule with tape.

continued on page 4

Local 1199 at Highlands Regional

MLK’s favorite union takes root in Floyd County

By John Hennen

For nearly forty years, Licensed Practical Nurses, Service, and Technical workers at Highlands Regional Medical Center in Prestonsburg (Floyd County), Kentucky, have been represented by a labor union that grew out of a New York City movement led by a Marxist Russian immigrant. Founded in 1932 by Leon Davis, Local 1199 began organizing Depression-ravaged New York hospital workers and flourished into a formidable militant working-class force in the city without protection from the 1935 Wagner Act, which did not cover hospital employees until 1974. Local 1199 organized the workers most unions did not want anything to do with—women, blacks, Puerto Ricans—who populated the low-wage service work in urban health care. Davis and Elliott Godoff, organizing director of Local 1199 by the late 1950s, emphasized racial and class solidarity, insisting that a union promote not only good wages and benefits but social equality. According to long-time 1199 cultural director Moe Foner, “1199’s inclusiveness was both a tactical recognition of the need for unity in fighting the boss and a part of the American Left’s active opposition to racism and ethnic prejudice.” Martin Luther King, Jr., repeatedly referred to Local 1199 as “my favorite union,” based on 1199’s militant positions on Civil Rights, economic justice, and its opposition to the war in Vietnam.

Shortly after King’s assassination in the spring of 1968, Coretta Scott King encouraged Davis and the staff of Local 1199 to carry their message of solidarity beyond New York City. Adopting the slogan “Soul Power and Union Power,” 1199 led a volatile four-month strike in 1969 by hospital workers in Charleston, South Carolina, which built a bridge between the Civil Rights and workers’ rights movements in the South. In 1970 Larry Harless, a West Virginia native who worked for 1199 in New York and Baltimore, convinced Davis and Godoff that the union was a natural fit to organize in the Appalachian coal fields, largely because of the union tradition

established by the United Mine Workers of America.

Davis understood the commonalities of economic exploitation between poor white Appalachians and poor minorities elsewhere. By 1971 Local 1199, staffed by a few native Appalachians with radical legacies, was organizing small private hospitals and nursing homes in the coal regions. The union’s first major win was in 1973 at Clinch Valley Hospital in Richlands, Virginia (a “Right-to-Work” state), and in the fall of 1975 Highlands Regional workers won an NLRB (National Labor Relations Board) election to be represented by Local 1199. The victory came despite a “union avoidance” campaign by Highlands Regional management, in which Local 1199 was portrayed as a “communist union” and a “nigger union.” Longtime Highlands Regional leader Larry Daniels, who was a lab technician and union activist in 1975, recalled that 1199 organizer Danie Jo Stewart, a West Virginia ex-Marine and former Marshall University SDS activist, inoculated the membership against management tactics, which he had seen before. “Once you know the strategy of a union buster,” said Stewart, “you’ve got it down pat.”

201-0

Over the years the Highlands Regional membership developed expertise in the minutiae of contract negotiation, grievance handling, membership education, internal organizing, and delegate (steward) training, assisted but not dominated by union staff. By the time contract renegotiation rolled around in the spring of 1981, however, they faced hospital management invigorated by the militant anti-unionism of the new “Reagan revolution” and determined to end unionism at Highlands Regional forever. As the contract deadline approached, hospital negotiators either refused to negotiate a new deal altogether or, according to the union, stonewalled the 1199 bargaining committee on wage and benefit language. The hospital held fast on concessions from the union, essentially rolling back



Union workers at Highlands Regional Medical Center on strike. Photo from Summer 1981 newsletter, 1199 News.

hard-won gains since 1975 and undermining 1199’s support from the membership. Nevertheless, when the current contract expired and it was obvious that the hospital was not bargaining in good faith, the membership voted 201-0 to strike on March 23, 1981.

What ensued in the next four months can be described as low-intensity warfare. The hospital’s blueprint foreshadowed the generational campaign by corporate America to discredit and destroy organized labor. Each side charged the other with fomenting the strike. Local 1199 accused the hospital of union busting, while the hospital charged the union with holding sick people hostage. Local 1199 district representative Tom Woodruff (locals in West Virginia, Kentucky, and Ohio had formed a regional district in 1980), another radical West Virginian, claimed that the wage rates offered by the hospital would leave HRMC workers paid “well below” the rates at other regional hospitals. When Local 1199 insisted that local media be present at contract negotiations, management dismissed the proposal as “solely for publicity.”

The poisonous environment escalated as fighting broke out on picket lines, striker and management vehicles suffered damage, and hospital supervisors

and non-bargaining unit personnel were reassigned to treat 30 patients, down from the usual 125 (emergency services were not impeded.) Daniels, Woodruff, and six other 1199ers were indicted in Floyd County Circuit Court for 2nd degree assault on hospital security, and eyewitnesses reported that a security guard “threatened to blow somebody’s head off with a gun.” Two guards were charged with assault against striking nurses. The hospital comptroller was charged with “wanton endangerment” for running nurses off the road.

Management hired Murray Guard, Inc., a Tennessee firm, and Nuckols Security from Cincinnati, Ohio, to patrol hospital property and videotape picket lines. One reporter noted that the Nuckols guards, equipped with billy clubs and guns, their vans carrying riot gear, projected the “appearance of an armed camp . . . every move by the pickets was videotaped.” Strikers claimed “they were followed home by guards, had their union headquarters shot at, and were victims of telephone threats that they would be seriously harmed if they did not end the strike.” After a strike settlement took effect on July 7, the hospital published a compendium of

continued on page 7

Undressing (cont.)

continued from page 3

Only one session was officially titled: “Recognizing a person as a sexual being,” yet many discussions spoke to this notion. Although seemingly counterintuitive, there was a need to discuss that people *are people*, regardless of disability, orientation, or any other marginalizing factor. Acknowledging sexuality as inherent to the human experience means recognizing that it is not reserved for the privileged, for those protected by society’s norms. So then if sexuality is not a privilege, is it a right? Not necessarily, as Sheppard-Jones affirmed: “It’s even more basic than [a right] because if you look at the hierarchy of needs—it’s physiological. If you look at Maslow’s Hierarchy—first rung. If your needs aren’t met there, how do you move on and aspire to anything beyond that?”

In bringing up these topics for discussion, the goal was never to take away the private and personal dynamic of one’s sexual life. Sherry Culp, with the Nursing Home Ombudsman Agency, said it well: “Our focus as advocates is that each resident receive individualized care. This [topic] is one of those things where you have to be focused on the individuals...or you could really cause harm to someone.”

Balancing privacy and advocacy

Throughout the unconference, a common focus on individualization & self-advocacy emphasized that these are indeed private matters. Yet the topics must be addressed, because so many live their private lives under the care of a guardian, social care agency, or

long-term care facility. Individuals’ rights to a healthy and full human experience should not be sacrificed because of such a situation. Important questions arose, such as: How can a guardian effectively maintain their role, without acting as the conscience of the individual? How can one be their own health self-advocate if they don’t feel it’s ok to discuss sexual matters in a trusted setting?

To begin to answer the questions, many expressed that it is essential we normalize sexuality in society. Fear not—“normalizing sexuality” is not equivalent to fostering a sexually charged world with rampant open eroticism. It is recognizing that there are appropriate venues for discussing and exploring sexuality, regardless of gender, orientation, age, and physical or intellectual disability. In a country where court rulings determine much of guardianship and caregiver stipulations, we need educated judiciaries comfortable with really examining topics regarding human sexuality. In Kentucky, Medicaid waivers are currently being rewritten with a focus on improving community living. In the past, issues of an individual’s needs as a sexual being have been ignored. Perhaps this time there will be a push to tackle these issues in the revisions.

Many conveyed that the unconference was either the first or second time they had seen sexuality and disability discussed in such a large group. After some research, I can attest that there are comparable conversations going on—via the Internet. Not surprisingly so, since the Internet provides a relatively “safe” platform for communication,

where ideas can bounce around quickly and unreservedly. But while constructive, this is no substitute for embodied conversations. Truly, we need face-to-face dialogue to move our communities, state agencies, and government towards progressive action. We need the spark of human interaction. And as the Undressing Normal unconference proved, a tangible event can also provide a nonjudgmental, positive atmosphere to have these discussions.

Before the day of the unconference, I sat down with Burris, and we got to talking about the “touchiness” of issues regarding sexuality and disability, and gender identity on top of that. He mused: “And it will remain that way until people start talking about them. Maybe they’ll always remain that way. Maybe people will just always talk about them. Well, just always talking about them is better than not talking, right?”

Moving forward

Now, I think Burris would agree: while I do foresee a lot more talking, action is imminent. In fact, continuing the charge was a key component of the day’s objectives. Careful notes were taken in each session, preserving at least two action steps the group felt to be appropriate follow-up for their conversations. Examples of action steps included better training surrounding LGBT issues for direct care providers, more thorough education for guardians regarding matters of sexuality, and—wait—more unconferences to be held. From what I hear, the day’s evaluations indicate that could be an extremely promising extension.

When I talked with Sheppard-Jones a week after the unconference, a meeting was already set for the planners to come back together and debrief. They intended to assess compiled notes from the event and propose ways to report back out. She stressed: “Some things are very important, and need to stay in the forefront. This is one of them. I think we’ve got people’s attention so we need to be good stewards and not lose it and move forward.”

I encourage you to follow-up on the unconference’s blog. See what’s happening. As we discussed that Friday, these topics are uncomfortable for us all—disability or no disability. In many cases, we grow up and maintain the practice of not talking about sex. But as incidents such as those in Hazard County and the National Senior Citizen Law Center’s study prove, we all must be raising the questions, and responding appropriately and respectfully to them. Very few of us currently have answers, no matter how long we have recognized ourselves as sexual beings. Genuine answers are possible, however, through awareness, education, and most basically—a willingness to ask.

Another main tenet of an unconference is “when it’s over, it’s over.” I’m not sure how I feel about this one, quite honestly. If this unarticle has done anything, I hope it has communicated that “it” is far from over.

The official blog site can be found at undressingnormal.wordpress.com. For more information on the unconference phenomena, visit <http://www.unconference.net>.

“According to Jillson, Cedar Creek and the Kentucky had run in parallel “opposing out-bows” to the north, separated by a high, narrow ridge.”

MARCH 2012

Channels (cont.)

continued from page 1

next room. And like children, the mes-sages we construe are all preposterously self-serving. We hear conversation about ourselves; we want the river to echo our significance back to us. From the earli-est record, humans have nominalized themselves as masters and victims of, along, beside, upon the river.

Morning of: tarps and shuttles

I would be remiss to suggest we operate like clockwork. I sleep until 8:30, the seven beers, three glasses of pinot, two shots of Zwack, and 13 replays of Curtis Mayfield’s Superfly soundtrack the night before a fine example of piss-poor decision-making. Danny is down-stairs, hauling gear and dry bags up from the basement and amassing them on the living room carpet. “The rain stopped sometime early this morning,” he announces, dropping his tent and sleeping bag on the floor. “What do you think? Tent or tarp?”

“Tarp, definitely.” I reply. “What’s the updated forecast?”

“Cloudy, rain, sleet, snow, maybe patches of sun. Colder than we thought.”

Within an hour Keith arrives. We load boats and gear, say our goodbyes to Jules and babe, and make our way to Lyle’s on the south side of town. By 11:30 we’re on our way toward Elkhorn and the Kentucky, and by the time the cara-van pulls into Stillwater Campground it’s already 1pm. A deeply rooted cluster of RVs backs up to the confluence. After unloading kit and caboodle on a mud-caked concrete ramp, Danny follows me back to Highway 127, and we turn north toward Owen County. The concrete bridge over Cedar Creek inhibits a clear view of the gorge below, and immediately to the west the small community of Monterey nestles down in perpendicular valleys where Cedar Creek debouches into the Kentucky. Even by car a cursory survey of the surrounding environs cuts a radical impression. With its white, clapboard houses and sleepy, redbrick downtown, Monterey sits in a Pleistocene “break through,” where, according to the late W. R. Jillson, former state geologist, Cedar Creek and the Kentucky had run in parallel “opposing out-bows” to the north, separated by a high, narrow ridge, evidence that both streams fol-lowed entrenched meanders. Once this dividing ridge was breached, Cedar Creek was significantly foreshort-ened; the lower stretch of its valley was deserted and left to accumulate new headwater capillaries and form a new drainage, known today as Pond Creek.

Route 355 breaks from 127 just north of Monterey, cuts to the north-west and quickly dips down into Cedar Creek’s deserted channel, broad valley cradling diminutive, derivative Pond Creek that rejoins the Kentucky with significantly less fanfare four or five miles downstream. From here, 355 skirts the mainstream, a narrow pass hugging crumbly cliffs, identified on the barge maps as “Sliding Bank,” to the iron bridge at the mouth of Severn Creek. The river then bends to the southwest on the downstream side of Clements Bottom, and 355 contin-ues northwest toward the community of Gratz. Across Route 22 bridge, Lockport and lock 2 are just a short drive down Route 389. We leave my truck at the public ramp in Lockport; lock 2 is submerged, the upper gates barely visible in the swirling water, and we slow to a ponderous 5 mph, sizing up the current, the highest and swiftest we’ve yet dared to paddle.

Elkhorn to Webbs Bend

We make the shuttle in a cool 45 minutes. Back at Stillwater, Keith and Lyle have befriended the natives. “Dennis” of Moneteray, now a perma-nent resident of the campground, is issu-ing a clear but friendly warning: “Better keep your matches dry ‘cause your asses are gettin’ wet.” At 2:30 we push off, the Elkhorn’s swollen current catching each craft, and just ahead, the Kentucky,

irritated by last night’s torrent and today’s headwind, pushes impatiently around Elkhorn Bar.

At the confluence, the river cuts sharply southwest then, in less than a half-mile, sharply back to the north-west. Elkhorn Bend forms an acute, northerly-oriented “hook,” around which the Kentucky constricts and picks up the emboldening tributary waters. Immediately out of the mouth, though, we encounter a tremendous eddy, momentum of the Elkhorn’s cur-rent pushing us southeast, and then the reverse flow of the eddy spinning our canoes northeast at the point of the “hook.” We circle in the converging forces, and Danny, rummaging in a dry bag, produces two Sunrise Bakery sand-wiches—hard salami, Asiago, oregano pesto, on baguette—calls for us to raft, and halves them between the four of us, our momentary savior performing his routine miracle of meat and loaves and we the acquiescing disciples mak-ing orthodoxy of his riverine, epicurean sacrament. With sandwiches in one



Tarp camping on main stem, Owen County. Photo by Wes Houpp.

hand and paddles in the other, we nudge into the channel, spinning, eating, fully given over to disorganized whims of ris-ing water.

Immediately around Lower Elkhorn Bend, the river resumes a northwesterly course and low rock bluffs blot out the sun in the southwest. The current has carried us several miles in little more than 20 minutes. “The community of Polsgrove is somewhere up ahead, squarely in the fluvial lap of a deserted meander.” I consult the navigational chart while Lyle surveys the bottom.

Keith scans the bank. “I see a few dilapidated tobacco barns, but that’s about it.” The winter sun has long since cracked its apex by the time we reach the mouth of Flat Creek. Just ahead the river cuts 90° to the east around Payton Bend, and in less than a half-mile more we enter Webbs Bend.

Camp on the mainstem

“We should bivouac along the east-ern shore.” Webbs Bend presents broad bottomland, named LeCompte Bottom on the topographic map, but the sight, sound, and smell of cattle, as always, push us farther along. The eastern bank is narrow with no real options for camping except for infrequent, natu-ral benches dotting the foot of a sharp, wooded slope. Lyle spots a dry, rocky cut, winged by two such benches, jabs a paddle down, and turns to investigate. The troupe follows suit. The afternoon is dark gray, the current erratic and murky. The near-vertical gulch stretches up 250 feet between large limestone outcrop-pings, and the upstream bench, perched 30 feet or so above the river, is large and clear enough for camp. Mature sugar maples secure the perimeter.

After we pack up the gear, Danny clears a large circle in the leaves. “We need fire.” He forages wood along the steep incline behind us while Lyle and I unfurl the large tarp, strapping each corner to the nearest sugar maple. Keith finds two adequately spaced maples and hangs his hammock. The wind dies a lit-tle, the temperature hovering in the mid-thirties. We haven’t seen the sun all day. In twenty minutes, Danny has conjured a fire from damp sticks, and by dusk the

flames dance head-high. For dinner, Lyle has prepared a stew, large cuts of grass-fed beef marinated with onions and gar-lic in some sort of brown, gingery sauce, to be wed with a freezer bag full of broc-coli, zucchini, peppers, carrots, and cab-bage. For starters, though, he greases the pan with homemade Andouille sausage. The aroma wafts up through the canopy and weathered limestone bluffs. Silence and growing darkness lean in for a closer whiff. A pack of coyotes yips a distant approval from the far side of LeCompte Bottom. Thin cloud-cover hollows out the moon, refracting just enough light to spark animal eyes, show old ghosts how to find us should we fall asleep unaware.

LeCompte Bottom to Monterey

Per usual, Lyle’s up early the next morning. “The sleet stopped about an hour ago. Coffee’s just about ready.” For breakfast, we reheat last night’s stew, adding water and a cup of fresh-ground grits. It’s a strange but tasty concoction, a sort of hearty breakfast paste, just what a body needs to fortify itself against the

J-strokes, I find a slender hold below Keith’s position. Danny and Lyle cast off without catastrophe. In tight forma-tion, we set off, the headwind roaring cold static with a backbeat of lapping waves. Two miles later, we bend to the north, and the distant roar of water over the spillway, still two miles ahead, helps focus our attention on more existential endeavors.

Final approach and portage: Lock 3

We pass Balls Branch to the east and Stevens Branch to the west, and the crushing rapid over the spillway throws white spasms of water high in the January air. We make the Henry County side, and Lyle lands to scout portage, the rest of us holding bank, uncertain of his report. But in ten minutes he returns with skip and smile. The water level is only a foot or so below the top of the lock wall, and if we hug the bank, we can ease up along the inner wall and withdraw above the upper gate. So we proceed with care, maintaining course just outside the flooded, overarching trees. Inside a half-hour we stand on the lock wall like shipwreck survivors, boats and gear splayed around us on the cut-limestone apron.

Construction of Lock 3 began in 1836; it was put into operation in 1840 and modernized in 1882. In 1843, lock-masters were appointed, paid an annual salary of \$250, and provided housing adjacent to the locks to comfort them in their duties. After the Army Corps of Engineers assumed responsibility for overseeing Kentucky River navigation, they constructed additional houses at locks 1-5 in the 1890s. At lock 3, where both houses still stand, the Corps-built dwelling is far more ornate than its state-built predecessor. The “newer” house sits directly above the lock and displays the flourishes of design and appointment indicative of the Victorian period. Sadly, like so much Kentucky River infrastruc-ture, both houses languish.

“Better shove off.” Danny slaps his hands together and laughs. “The longer we’re on land the less time we have to get ourselves cold and wet. And I’m in it for the cold and wet.” Lyle gives him a wink. “You’re in it because you’re a compulsive river-whore, like the rest of us.” The clouds have given way to the kind of blue that almost gives away the universe but leaves the wonderer staring too long, straining neck and shoulders. All this water, all the water of the earth, finding the right stratig-raphy to step down and down, increas-ing in volume, its hoarse whisper “here I come again” reverberating from the comet-wind of Archean time, and we standby, our lives a quivering drop of water. We grouse about weather, poli-tics, religion, what humankind will do to itself and the earth, while the river goes on unconcerned with reck-less machinations of the brainy species. The river will have us in the end, call our water back to its flow as a habit of course. In the words of naturalist Loren Eiseley, “As for men, those myriad little detached ponds with their own swarming corpuscular life, what were they but a way that water has of going about beyond the reach of rivers?” We gather by the boats, pass the bottle of Beam, and reenter the wind-tussled current hell-bent on making good time to Severn Creek, our projected second-night’s bivouac, as if our time—our quivering drop—is all there is.

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Migrant worker (cont.)

continued from page 1

go. We sold our cars, held a garage sale to make a little money and get rid of some of our junk, put the rest into storage (read: Stephanie’s parents’ basement), had a final drink with our Lexington friends, and set off for Europe—with a few thousand dollars and our fingers crossed.

After spending the first several months in Amsterdam looking unsuccessfully for work, watching our meager savings dwindle to nothing, and getting increasingly nervous about my lack of job prospects, I got extraordinarily lucky and landed a full-time teaching gig at a university in the south of the Netherlands. It was temporary and I’d have to commute but the pay was pretty good and it meant that we would, at least, be able to afford our outrageously high rent and not default on our debts back home.

When I was offered the job, we sighed a tremendous sigh of relief and our blood pressures returned to levels capable of sustaining human life. For the next six months or so, we were able to enjoy our lives in Amsterdam.

We really like it here. The city is beautiful and full of interesting things to do. We found a comfortable, albeit expensive, apartment, started making friends and having a social life, and when Occupy Amsterdam was established in October, I found an outlet for my political energies (and my occasional need to shout at the ruling elite through a bullhorn).

But, like our jobs, this stress-holiday turned out to be temporary. We now have less than a year before both of our

employment contracts expire and we are right back in the exhausting and stressful situation of having to look for jobs in the midst of a brutal economic recession with no end in sight. We’ve been able to save a little money, but not enough to last us two months without work. Despite our best efforts to just roll with the punches, we’re feeling the anxiety mounting all over again.

I think, in the backs of our minds, both Stephanie and I believe that at least one of us will find a job somewhere either in Europe or the US and that it will be enough for us to get by on. But fuck, we’re in our mid-30s and we’re ready to be done with just barely ‘getting by.’ We’re fed up with having to look for new jobs every couple of years, with not being able to put away money for retirement, with wondering if we’ll ever be able to pay off our student loans, if we’ll ever have any job security, if we’re going to have health insurance this time next year, or if we’ll ever finally be able to put down roots in a place and be able to stay there for more than 24 or 36 months. We’re exhausted, we’re stressed out, and we’re pissed off.

We are not alone

We can’t stay in the Netherlands without work and the job market here is as tight as it is everywhere else. As the economic crisis in the Eurozone deepens, as the people of Greece, Spain, Portugal, Ireland, Italy and other peripheral European countries continue to get beaten down by inhuman levels of austerity and by police batons, the situation isn’t going to get better anytime soon. Migrants from the struggling European countries are flooding into the wealthier



Sign from Greek solidarity rally at the Beursplein in Amsterdam, February 18. Photo by Michael Marchman.

ones, driving down wages and increasing nationalist and anti-immigrant sentiments. Austerity measures are now being introduced here in the Netherlands, one of the wealthier European economies, and working people are beginning to feel the crunch. A sense of frustration and impending hardship is setting in.

So we know we are not alone. And we realize that millions (in fact, billions) of people around the world have it much, much harder than we do. We realize that our position as white Americans with advanced degrees means our prospects are better than those of many other people. But like so many others we feel like we’re living on the razor’s edge.

That’s why, for as long as I’m in Europe, I’m going to continue organizing and agitating here to demand an end

to this vicious economic and political order that is screwing us by the billion. That’s why I am joining with my Greek, Spanish, Portuguese brothers and sisters in the streets of Europe and supporting them in their just and necessary struggle against the brutal austerity being forced upon us all so the European and American banks can continue their global campaigns of rape and pillage. And that’s why, when I eventually return to the US, I’ll be joining you in the streets, and in the public square, and outside the Chase Bank on East Main in downtown Lexington, or wherever it is that you happen to be raising hell and fighting to put a end to this brutal and inhuman system.

Love and solidarity from Amsterdam.

Corporate personhood (cont.)

continued from page 1

Hartmann, Ted Nace, David Korten, and Naomi Klein have been writing about the disintegration of democracy at the hands of corporate structures. But most of us—even undergraduate history majors—are now realizing that there was a conspicuous absence in our education: the history of the corporation.

History is peppered with warnings about the need to control corporations. The oldest quote I’ve found is from Sir Edward Coke (1549-1634): “They (corporations) cannot commit treason, nor be outlawed nor excommunicated, for they have no souls.”

If we missed Coke, surely as enamored as we are of our founders, we should have paid heed to Thomas Jefferson’s warning in 1816: “I hope we shall crush in its birth the aristocracy of our moneyed corporations which dare already to challenge our government to a trial of strength and bid defiance to the laws of our country.”

James Madison, a supporter of free commerce, in 1817 drew the line when he wrote: “There is an evil which ought to be guarded against in the indefinite accumulation of property from the capacity of holding it in perpetuity by . . . corporations. The power of all corporations ought to be limited in this respect. The growing wealth acquired by them never fails to be a source of abuses.”

I was really surprised to come across this passionate declaration from President Grover Cleveland (1885-1889): “As we view the achievements of aggregated capital, we discover the existence of trusts, combinations, and monopolies, while the citizen is struggling far in the rear or is trampled to death beneath an iron heel. Corporations, which should be the carefully restrained creatures of the law and the servants of the people, are fast becoming the people’s masters.”

In his 1912 address to the Ohio Constitutional Convention, William Jennings Bryan put it plainly when he said: “A corporation has no rights except those given it by law. It can exercise no power except that conferred upon it by the people through legislation, and the people should be as free to withhold as to give, public interest and not private

advantage being the end in view.”

There are apparently volumes we should have read and taken to heart. We should have been warned that, regardless of the conveniences they offered, the instant gratification they provided, or the jobs they boasted of creating, corporations were, after all, creations of the people through their government. Corporations should always have been limited in their scope, controlled by regulation with the goal of serving the public good.

But in 1919 Henry Ford wanted to invest profits in expansion and hiring more employees, spreading the ability to profit from the industry. He was challenged in the Michigan case, *Dodge v. Ford Motor Co.* The court ruled that a corporation’s sole purpose is to serve its bottom line—make money for the shareholders—and the public good need not be its goal. That precedent has since ruled the day throughout the courts.

Awakening

So, we American masses were asleep at the wheel for two centuries. Now it has been two years since the *Citizens United* decision, which was so blatantly “legislation from the bench” that it has begun to wake the people. What gives me the idea that an awakening is afoot? There are growing glimmers of light across the country.

Governing bodies from San Francisco, Denver, and New York City have passed resolutions in favor of a constitutional amendment to declare that corporations are not people, and money is not speech. The Wisconsin state legislature is considering such a resolution. In Salt Lake City, a petition is circulating to put the issue on the ballot, and it’s already on the slate in Corvallis, Oregon.

As this article was being prepared, the Supreme Court stayed Montana’s court ruling that Citizens United would not stop the Blue Sky state from regulating its campaign finances as it has for a hundred years. It’s hard to believe that the Supreme Court Justices will throw another log on the fire that is beginning to spread. Good sense might instead suggest that the Court reverse itself, at least in part—that might throw water

on the fire, but would not solve the problem, of course. What we really need is a full-scale movement to push back corporate personhood.

Various pieces of election reform and proposals for Constitutional amendments are filed in Congress at the moment, but as Thoreau said in *Walden*: “there are a thousand hacking at the branches of evil to one who is striking at the root.”

This isn’t a partisan issue. National polls over the last two years have shown

opportunity to make a future with a government of, for, and by the people—this time for real. Re-educating ourselves is absolutely necessary. Concurrent with learning the facts, we must commit to the hard work of grassroots organizing for which numbers are crucial. Kentuckians thinking on this issue now have a vehicle to channel their efforts for reform.

In mid-November, Central Kentucky Move to Amend (CKYMTA) was organized as an affiliate of the

CENTRAL KENTUCKY MOVE TO AMEND

The next meeting of CKYMTA will be Sunday, March 18, 1:15P.M. at the downtown branch of Lexington’s Public Library, fourth floor conference room. We will be developing plans for the next eight months.

All interested folks are invited. Please RSVP and get details by emailing ckymta@gmail.com. You can also check us out at www.ckymta.org where you can move to our blog or to the national website.

70-80 percent of all people perceive campaign contributions by corporations as bribes and believe that corporations have too much power. At those percentages, the issue crosses party lines.

Advocacy organizations on the environment, health, energy, education, food and drug protection—any passion you can name—are realizing they will never make significant progress until the root of corporate control is severed.

Move to amend

The radical change we need will require a major, dramatic grassroots uprising. We have a once in a lifetime

national coalition building organization, Move to Amend (MTA). Today there are more than 70 affiliates around the country. On January 20, some 60 Move to Amend Kentuckians commemorated the second anniversary of *Citizens United* through an “Occupy the Courts” demonstration at Lexington’s Federal Court House. There were over 130 such demonstrations across the country.

MTA’s long-range goal is an amendment to the Constitution declaring unequivocally that corporations are not people and money is not speech. Join the movement.

The Vatican States of America

By Marcus Flores

This will not be the first column dedicated to Rick Santorum. Little attention was given to him when he was nestled into the shadow of obscurity and bigotry in which he ought to have remained. But since then, Santorum has claimed a belated win in Iowa and added more states to his count, meaning that he has catapulted himself into the role of a viable politician. Consequently, concerned voters ought to be glaring at the Senator even more.

Santorum has quite the desire—a need even—to insert his Catholic tentacles into everyone’s bedroom. This invasion takes numerous forms. By an act of sophistry, or perhaps creative ignorance, he posits that the Constitution permits states to decide whether or not to allow birth control for consenting and married adults. He has also vowed to annul all gay marriages if elected president, because he believes “nothing is wrong with homosexuality, only homosexual acts.” Most significantly, the Senator has made it incredibly clear that he opposes abortion under *all* circumstances. These are no less than outrageous assaults on civil liberties.

Vine Street (cont.)

continued from page 3

is that our spoke/wheel traffic infrastructure will not accommodate it. No wonder, then, that the developers chose to retreat when those 50-some citizens appeared at a council meeting to oppose closure of the Vine Street curve. And no wonder the Council reversed its initial 13-2 vote to close Vine at the yoke.

More important, though, the Yoke Analysis, and particularly its February 2001 Addendum, underscores the lengths to which developers and planners have gone in promoting, against the weight of evidence, downtown street conversion. Recall that the December 2000 Analysis, Scenario 3, concludes that extending Newtown to Versailles Road has no material impact on downtown congestion. Yet just two months later, the Addendum concludes that the

First of all, the Supreme Court in its 1965 *Griswold v. Connecticut* decision declared that outlawing contraceptives was unconstitutional. The reason was simple. The Fourth Amendment of the Bill of Rights protects against unwarranted searches and seizures, meaning an elite unit of condom cops tasked with snuffing out instances of safe sex would have to violate one’s privacy in order to enforce the rule of law. Thirty-eight years later, in 2003, a Texas law enforcement official took a call about a threatening gun-wielding man near an apartment complex just outside of Houston. When the deputy arrived, he found what people like Santorum deem far worse: two homosexual men engaged in consensual oral sex, who were summarily arrested for violating the Texas Sodomy law (no word on the gunman). Their case ultimately resulted in the Supreme Court landmark decision *Lawrence v. Texas*, a ruling that invalidated Texas’ sodomy laws under similar grounds as *Griswold v. Connecticut*: privacy.

This leads to the point concerning abortion. Few Americans are entirely comfortable with the idea of feticide in any sense, but Retired Justice David Souter offers persuasive evidence to support the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* ruling.

extension “will help some of the congestion created by the closure of the Vine Street Yoke and the conversion of Main Street to two-way.”

Nowhere is the bias in favor of conversion more apparent than in the example of Maxwell Street. The 2000 Yoke Analysis concludes that conversion of Maxwell isn’t feasible, as does the \$100,000 2007 Entran Traffic Study. The Downtown Streetscape Plan, released in summer 2008, cites the Traffic Study to conclude that conversion of Main and Vine would result in traffic congestion that the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet would find unacceptable.

In the very next paragraph, however, the Plan completely ignores the findings of both the 2000 and 2007 studies which demonstrate that Maxwell is the least suitable for conversion of all the streets:

Overtuning it, he claims, would subvert the legitimacy of the Supreme Court and suggest a judiciary collapse under social and political tension. Although the legislative process makes it incredibly unlikely, suppose a well-funded interest group and pugnacious politician managed to succeed in challenging the legality of abortion? Common sense dictates that a provision regarding maternal health would be, at minimum, absolutely mandatory. This hypothetical clause *should* resonate with Santorum.

In 1996, his wife Karen underwent a most tragic pregnancy complication. After exhausting current medical methods, the doctors informed Santorum and his delirious wife that it was either her or the unborn child. Doctors attempted a vastly premature delivery resulting in the child’s death a few hours later. In order to assuage the unspeakable pangs of a lost child, the Santorums brought the child home and mourned with their family. Forms of catharsis tend to vary, but one has to ask: How could such an event fail to trigger considerations of the mother’s health? By allowing his wife to wrestle the Reaper, Santorum’s brainless views risked killing *both* mother and child while prolonging tremendous and avoidable agony.

“Discussions with the plan’s transportation consultants, Transportation Cabinet Representatives, Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and LFUCG staff have indicated and [sic] that the conversion of Limestone and Upper and High and Maxwell could also be achieved assuming that council supported the strategy, funding was available, and that a comprehensive engineering approach was utilized for each successive conversion.” In response to an open records request for all documents which might support this assertion, LFUCG produced a single one: the 2007 Traffic Study, which, of course, reached the precise opposite conclusion regarding Maxwell Street!

Earlier this year, LFUCG awarded \$450,000, obtained from federal stimulus dollars, to Entran—the same entity that conducted the 2000 and 2007

In June of 2011 Santorum claimed, bafflingly, that “medical exceptions are phony exceptions” that would “make an abortion ban ineffective.” The dissonance here is really quite difficult to quantify, for if Santorum knew much about pregnancy (with seven children, he should), he would know that ectopic implantation poses a significant risk to not only fertility, but maternal livelihood. In fact, it accounts for some 9% of all pregnancy related deaths.

So if Santorum had it his way, he would dissolve homosexual marriages where they are currently legal. Contraceptives would be lumped together with other black market commodities like narcotics and explosives. If your wife’s nonviable fetus is killing her, she and her child will at least die together. This is the design of the Senator’s ridiculous social posture: a retroactive carving of the American landscape to impose staunchly religious standards to which a scarce collection of Catholics even adhere. Meanwhile, Obama’s bloated budget shows no signs of curtailing spending. The Middle East remains primed and volatile. The Mexican-American border is wrought with mayhem. Santorum’s solution? Start by overturning *Roe v. Wade*.

studies demonstrating conversion is not feasible—to design plans for reconfiguring all of downtown’s one-way streets to two-way traffic. As I wrote numerous council members upon learning of this, “I find it remarkable that, with respect to Maxwell Street, we’re paying to configure a bridge to nowhere. The 2007 traffic study concluded that conversion of Maxwell is a non-starter; it simply isn’t feasible under any scenario. So I cannot fathom how it’s proper for us to use federal stimulus dollars to configure Maxwell for 2-way traffic.” As regards the other streets, I wrote: “We’re paying a consultant to configure plans which never had any hope of working in the first place.”

It is highly ironic, of course, that the same entity that in 2000 and 2007 concluded that conversion isn’t feasible will now be paid to make it happen anyway!

Local 1199 (cont.)

continued from page 4

news stories and company spin on the strike, with the hope that it would “provide motivation and encouragement for all health care professionals living with or facing the threat of unionization.”

Union merger

Local 1199 survived at Highlands Regional, no small feat in the context of the long war against labor. In 1989, the WV/KY/OH district of 1199 merged with the Service Employees International Union. The merger has offered extra security and stability for the union, but in 1999 Highlands Regional management played hardball again, advertising for “replacement workers” as contract negotiations loomed. This time, however, with the memory of the 1981 war still fresh in the minds of the people of Floyd County, lockout and strike threats evaporated quickly and the parties settled without a shutdown.

The 1989 merger with SEIU, a massive national union with a recent history of bitter internal power struggles, signaled a departure from the independent radicalism of the original Local 1199. The veteran membership, especially, misses the early struggles, even while appreciating the clout SEIU guarantees. The spirit of the old 1199 survives. As one organizer, a second-generation member, told me, “You know, SEIU wanted us to change our name, even drop 1199 altogether. But that’s one thing we fought them on.” Today, the LPNs, service, and technical workers at Highlands are represented by SEIU District 1199/WV/KY/OH.

Letter to the editor

What’s on your plate? If you do not eat locally grown, raised, and/or produced food, then more than likely, you are eating food that is not real. This “food” has been chemically processed and refined while adding artificial ingredients to produce it in different shapes, sizes, tastes, colors, and forms. And since our government allows genetically modified organisms (GMOs) to be consumed by humans and farm animals, our “food” may contain foreign genes, which have been spliced together in laboratories.

In the 1950s, petrochemical companies started mass producing synthetic chemicals—from petroleum—cheaply and developed a partnership with the food industry that still exists today. This partnership made it possible for “food” to be mass produced and preserved for long periods of time while using a minimal amount of natural ingredients. The “food” that we have been consuming is sold and marketed as food but does not taste, smell, or have the nutritional value that food did prior to “the great experiment.”

If you were born prior to the unauthorized experimentation of our food supply, then you grew up eating real, whole, and natural food—grown and raised by your family, neighbors, and/or community residents. However, if you were born after 1950 and did not grow up eating locally grown, raised, and/or produced food, then you may not know what’s on your plate. The

“food” that we have been consuming has taken a toll on the natural environment which we need to live—the land, air, and water; our individual and collective health; and our state’s economy.

In putting an end to the toll on Nature, our health, and economy, we can heed the advice that Dr. George Carver gave while working at Tuskegee Institute. In a 1916 article, Dr. Carver wrote, “few, if any realize the wealth within our county and the ease with which we can, not only live, but accumulate much above a living.” In doing so, we Kentuckians should resurrect our agricultural heritage and begin to value land and our connection to it by growing food locally.

In addition, we should convene with farmers, elected officials, business leaders, educators, chefs, the faith community, community activists, the youth, and other citizens to create a regional food system. The food system that we develop can revitalize our health, Nature, and our state’s economy, while creating an alternative to the industrial food system. Save the date, register, and make plans to attend the 2012 Bluegrass Local Food Summit. The 3-day Food Summit is from March 22-24 in Lexington. For more information, go to <http://www.sustainlex.org> or call Jim Embry at (859) 270-3699.

Thank you for your time. Have a great day!

Obiora Embry

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

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MARCH 2012

Lexington
PublicStacey
EarleyIn-Feed's 4th Annual

Heirloom Seed Sale

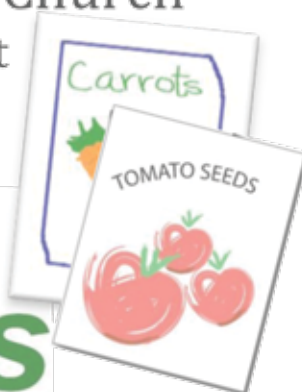
March 17, 2012

8 am – 3 pm

Woodland Christian Church

530 E. High Street

faith
feeds



For details and the 2012 seed catalog,
visit www.faithfeedslex.org



CROCK

Report



CROCKers prepare seeds for their Occupy Garden project.

CROCK, Community Radicals of Central Kentucky, meets regularly to discuss readings and work on projects with the intent of establishing a participatory society in our neighborhoods and municipalities. For more info, visit

<https://groups.google.com/group/crock-lex>