

VERITIES

Don't Call Me an Idealist
by Imani Evans and
Thom the World Poet

I can only describe it as a feeling of bemusement, what I feel whenever a person—whatever side of the fence he happens to be on—makes allusions to the so-called “idealism” of those of us who are against war. While begging the pardon of my anti-war friends who might be in the habit of using this word in the course of talking about what they do, I have to say that I have never felt myself to be acted upon by anything like “ideals,” however these may be defined. *It will take more than we have ever done before.*

My entire way of being in the world is that of the most reason-oriented, earth-bound creature whose presence you would ever want to suffer. To see me is to see someone for whom the only real thing in the world is what is immediately at hand, and who is compelled by this rather than by any noble calling from some higher realm. *Every part of all of us calls for us to find new solutions to old patterns.*

Whenever I engage in protest activity, I'm not brought there by anything more idealistic than my own selfish desire to keep my little world in one piece. This on-going hustle that I am in the habit of calling “my life” seems to prefer a stable, coherent world—exactly that which is endangered by the war-hungry cabal that is currently running our government. *We fight for peace because it makes sense to us.*

I don't look to higher realms very often, I guess because I am so busily engaged in my serpentine crawl among the low things of this world. Although I can only speak for myself, I dare say that there are anti-war folks who would be sympathetic to my self-depiction here, certainly enough to contradict the idea that what best describes us is our “idealism,” as opposed to the “realism” of those on the other side. *To build rather than to bomb; to create rather than to kill.*

I think any artist can easily apprehend what is involved. Over the last several months I have had the privilege of encountering men and women of savage creativity, who appear to institute various kinds of anarchy in the work that they do. The artistic is a realm of irony, loose significations, double-entendre, wild juxtapositions, creative self-debunking—all these things and more. But to see those artists involved in the anti-war protests that have been going on is to be reminded of a cardinal truth: for all their symbolic transgressions and ironic postures, artists are embedded in the same system of human relationships as everyone else. This is enough for them to join with “common folk” in demanding that stability and coherence continue to reign in their world. *It begins within each—like breath, as an antidote to death. We start to feel emergent unities, when who we are reaches out to share the spark!*

The same goes for a ragamuffin like myself. Any little thing I do presupposes my embeddedness in a given world. Like everyone else, I have been thrown into a world that I didn't make—a not-so-inviting, occasionally wretched world that I have difficulty embracing in full. And yet, the very fact that I have engaged in anti-war activities is proof that, by God, even though this world is in so many ways not what I would have asked for, I still apprehend something within this world that is *for me*, and is worth tending and caring for. That's some kind of miracle, no? *The first casualty is truth; killed by skilled ellipsis.*

The stability and order that we would like to see maintained is not, of course, the same as the "law and order" which is constantly invoked by those in power to justify the most punitive responses to social problems. Ours is an order in the most elemental sense of the word, referring to that precious and fragile system of relationships that we nurture, and which nurture us in turn. *There are more important things than war -- like friendship, and family, and food.*

From this perspective, the true anarchists would have to be those who make war, and the true idealists those who believe that a stable and functioning order can be created by military fiat. So how can I be an idealist? I'm just a scavenger, one who just manages to keep himself upright and moving through some inexpressible combination of swiftness and cunning. I'm not all that impressed with the abode that I have created, but am grateful that it manages to hold together in spite of itself. This is the ineffable order that I periodically bow to and in whose name I protest war. *There are more important things than war -- like everything.*



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Notes from the Woodshed

Paul Klemperer



A recent episode of the TV show *Southpark* showed the town evenly divided for and against the war on Iraq. Of course both sides said they “supported the troops.” The pro-war faction was represented by a flag-draped country singer, while the anti-war faction was led by a rocker in an Elvis-style white jumpsuit. Both groups claimed to be the bearer of American values. The town’s children, using insights gained from studying the American revolution, resolved the conflict by explaining that our country was founded on the principle of saying one thing while doing another. Thus, we can be for peace while we go to war.

It is no great revelation that hypocrisy has been a constant presence in our nation’s history. Perhaps it is a necessary evil for all governments. The writers of *Southpark* voice an often unstated axiom that we must balance our ideals with realpolitik. This axiom leads to uncomfortable compromises with a strong Orwellian flavor: To ensure peace we must go to war. To protect the sanctity of life we must be prepared to sacrifice some lives. To protect our democratic freedoms we must limit them. The oxymorons pile up until many of us retreat from a world we see as frighteningly absurd. But that may be a greater hypocrisy, to believe that you can step outside your membership in the collective hypocrisy.

The *Southpark* realpolitik is that America has a collective identity, which is its enduring strength: The warmongers need the peaceniks to preserve our ideal of a peaceful and democratic global community. The peaceniks need the warmongers to defend our national existence in a hostile world. Different, antagonistic factions balance each other in a plurality based on our constitutional rights. Thus we can piss off the world community while still

earning its admiration. It’s not the worst compromise, but is it the best we can do?

On a smaller scale the same questions arise when artists politicize their work. Some folks argue that all art is political on some level, since it encourages a certain view of the world. Of course the politics of a flag-drenched country music video are pretty clear, but what about less grandiose statements? What are the politics of a rock video that shows, for example, children from various nations and cultures? Ostensibly the message is to remind us of our common humanity, and of the innocence of youth. Very nice, and the screaming rock guitar lead is, I suppose, meant to reinforce the pathos of the human condition. But by its generality the message is also sufficiently vague that divergent political groups can exploit it. Yes, we must save the children, agrees the warmonger. That’s why we need to invade those third world countries and get rid of their evil dictators. The rock musicians toss their big unruly hairdos and mumble, “We can’t help it if some people don’t understand our message.” But isn’t this really just taking a politically (and financially) safe position, and doesn’t it just reinforce our legacy of hypocrisy?

There aren’t any easy answers, but one thing artists might do is study and understand their place in the historical and artistic continuum. We all build our individual art on the materials and traditions we find around us. Where did these come from and how were they associated with the politics of previous generations? For example, how many rock musicians are aware of the impact of Bob Dylan on their music, particularly their lyrics? How many are aware of the impact of Woody Guthrie on Dylan, and the impact of the labor movement on Guthrie? You can go even further back to the music of the abolition and



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suffrage movements which influenced 20th century labor organizing. You can trace a clear line from 19th century folk music to 21st century rock "message" music, if you want. It may not make political/artistic choices easier, but they will be better informed.

In the 1960s there was strong opposition to "working within the system." It's not a common ideology anymore, and most artists accept that compromises are inevitable. But



perhaps a deeper understanding of our artistic traditions can cut through some of the hypocrisy. "The system" is really a shifting balance of institutions, built by previous generations and now maintained by ours. If we understand these institutions more fully, their accomplishments, failures, and compromises, we may be able to whittle away at that legacy of hypocrisy. At least our art will be deeper, rock leads notwithstanding.

by Reginald L. Goodwin

"At war with East Asia; Eurasia is our ally."
"We've always been at war with Eurasia; East Asia is our ally."

Blair, soothsayer
Wrote under the pen name for a river
On a fictional character - Winston Smith
Working at the ministry of Truth

With all histories
The mystery of factual accuracy
Is in the hands and the "victors'"
View

Who knew his work was prophecy
Not of totalitarian governments
But hypocrisies masked as such
To feed an elite bunch

Intent on mass manufacture
Of Malthusian slave labor
The favor of voting in democracies
Taken away in a fortnight

Of cyber terror:
The error of not matching precisely
An electorate without guilt
Shame, or crime

But did the time
Anyway as ballets, dimples
Were thrown away
Like needless chaff

We stand at the precipice
Of Drake's Equation
The occasion to contemplate
Aliens that survive

Their own nuclear age
And political landscape
No *casus belli* -- "perpetual war for perpetual peace"
From the pundit dripped in oil and peanut butter and jelly.

Pyrrhic Victories:5

section eight

Daniel Davis Clayton

Taking your first crap after you get your guts sewn back into your stomach really sucks. I mean, it feels like someone's slow-raping you backwards. You're just sitting there helpless with this log hanging out because your body is too weak to push. And you have to push because you have no choice but to get it out, get it all out; i.e. the past four days behind you through your multi-layered spiritual release.

So fear-fighting the fact that you're afraid to push as hard as you want because those staples holding that three day old cut together that happens to be holding your guts into place that happens to cost you two-grand that happens to mean you can't miss another day of work for the rest of the year that happens to mean you can't carry out your secret plans to quit your job at the most inopportune time to put your hated co-workers in a perilous situation happens to be the only thought on your mind as you feel the seams of your leaking scar beginning to rip apart. So you push softly. And you have to hold your breath to push. And every time you inhale you can feel that log easing back inside like it's trying to get back home so you start to hyperventilate because you refuse to allow your guts to get the best of you in addition to the fact that you're not breathing.

You broke into a cold sweat fifteen minutes ago and you can't compromise your manhood by crying out to the heavens so you whimper ever-so-softly as if Jesus is sitting in your lap while you're taking this huge dump. And you're looking in the mirror murmuring in this delusional limbo near-death state I like to call American foreign policy. And you're reminded of that moment two days ago when you were so loaded on dope that you decided to really have that "little talk with Jesus." And not the "porcelain god" talk, but the "say J, I need tuh holla atcha 'bout this whole roman catholic imagery shit" talk that sometimes has to happen with black folks and Jesus because two days ago at 3:28a.m. when I was in the same place I'm in right now (you know, freezing my nads off in this little claustrophobic death trap) wondering if I were

going to live or die because I hadn't pissed in seven hours and I realized that I was a M.J. skin creme application and a crown of thorns short of the goatee-shoulder-length-haired-overworked images of roman Jesus I sometimes find on the walls of negro churches. Give the guy a hula shirt and he could be any one of the Austinites you'll pass on the street today while you're out and about 'cause only out and about folks get their hands on the A.D.A.

And I'm thinking, "J, why don't you use me as your physical rep here on earth since I kinda look like your negro version anyway. I'll even throw in a little miracle work you know, a few good deeds, I mean a couple of good words for you dawg." And J said, "fo' shizzle my nizzle" and just at that moment I was touched by the holy spirit and realized that all roads do lead to Rome when empire building is in full swing.

But anyway, back to the crapper. So there's this vein in my forehead that's on the verge of rupture and I'm starting to get dizzy. And I really am starting to have this spiritual rapture thing going on with my ass and my brain and my religion and it's starting to merge into one so I'm starting to feel euphoric. Like I'm all knowing. And this whole fecal impaction episode is feeling like I'm passing a freaking brick through my lower intestine.

Ok, imagine this. You stick a brick in some panty hose, right? Now, in trying to shake the brick out, how likely are you to rip every fiber of that elastic material whose primary function is to...ok, sorry, just trying to make it real. So I'm in the 21st minute of this whole ordeal and I'm starting to get some plop-plop-fizzy-fizzy action going on which is really encouraging. My new omnipotence has got me feeling like Survivor. You know, reality TV. Like someone's got a camera on me and I'm the victim of some sick bloopers joke put on by the holy trinity (bush, cheney, and rumsfeld) and their whole point to the world of entertainment is to see if we will stick around for the next show (Syria, North Korea, France) and I'm biting my knuckles and sweating bullets because when you take a

hard shit no one's going to pat you on the back for a job well done. Especially when you've got to get your guts sewn back together for a second time after you're finished.

And I'm kinda glad that the chick from

The Bache because th with a litt light whic the whole rebuild Iraq the rich v off of fi twenty ye trying to whole slo rape idea paragraph sit well ir know why hearing at this monst notice tha tion is e Iraq all the time or all a b o u t how the average working Joe car take ; hard shit i his neigh bor's bac yard and c kid got sh termind o the law w dred peop but will f people for east side t

Speak

town, I took a picture of a stop sign in Clarksville the day before my surgery where some neo-hippie dude has stenciled "the War" beneath STOP. And I'm wondering, who's going to stop that? And I'm wondering when are these guys going to learn that you're just

funding the local police department each and every time you get arrested and have to pay your "do not pass go, do not collect 200 smackarros, go directly to jail dumbass" fines

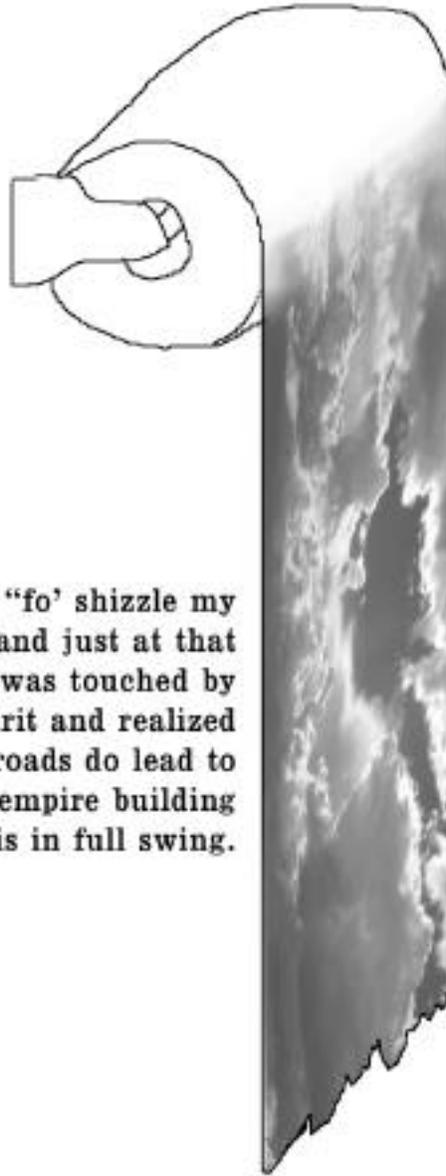
instead of spending your collec-

tive monies to run a candidate against the wackos you hate the most. But then again, you're all wackos too so who's going to keep your high-falut-tin', hula shirt wearing, weed smoking, career student asses out of the legislature?

So after a full thirty-six minutes of aorta popping stress and my mom checking on me four times to see if I had passed out; I gave one last ditch effort to make since of it all but there were too many memories, too many shit stains, and too much reason wrapped up in that empire of little booboo balls marauding at the bottom of the can so I gave it all a good flush. Good riddance.

And hey cuz, if you've got a hernia, I suggest you get that thing fixed early because it's got to get fixed and something small always turns into something large and pretty soon your guts are poking out of your belly. You can get it fixed you know, but that may require your

visiting an old friend like am with a routine dump ay strain a stapled-together healing process and have you sweating bullets and talking to Jesus; the whole thing taking just a little longer than you would have liked.



And J said, "fo' shizzle my nizzle" and just at that moment I was touched by the holy spirit and realized that all roads do lead to Rome when empire building is in full swing.



Art installation enables digital world travel • by Cesar Diaz

A few years ago, local Austin artist Cinque Hicks was surfing the internet when he encountered a website that could allow an online user to manipulate the lights of a foreign city through various commands on a computer. This fascinated Hicks and inspired him to create something similar, something that is located in one place but ultimately affects another. This inspiration laid the groundwork for *We All Are Global Nomads*, a digital installation artwork that is currently running its inaugural exhibit at Republic Square Park. This ambitious project exhibits seven 10-foot screens, each displaying continuous images of people from around the world from a live wireless Internet feed. *We All Are Global Nomads* combines network technology with images of people from around the world.

"People meet and get to know one another through the Internet without ever meeting in person. I was interested in how digital technology—the Internet affects the world in obvious, subtle ways. I want to explore how international boundaries matter less now," says Hicks.

The project is not just designed to challenge the relevance of national boundaries but to illustrate the digital divide that separates various countries. Hicks says his goal was to fabricate a "multiracial and multi-national vision" which represents and highlights the unity of technology and its online participants. "The world is a stratified place. I want to highlight less-

represented countries in cyberspace like Morocco or Nigeria."

Hicks was also partially inspired by the events of September 11th though he cautions that the core idea for this project had been gestating since he started working with digital media as a graphic designer in 1992. Hicks says that the adverse affects of September 11th have only recently become relevant. *We All Are Global Nomads* is a way to "respond to the growing xenophobia and paranoia in the wake of those events."

Joining the *We All Are Global Nomads* tribe is simple. Anyone that is interested can log on to the official website (www.weallareglobalnomads.com), upload a digital photograph, and answer a simple question: what's outside your window right now? When asked about the public response to his project, Hicks grins while saying that he "underestimated the capacity" of the online community.

Hicks began posting bulletins promoting *We All Are Global Nomads* on public listservs like Net Time and wherever he thought people were interested. The response has been enormous: he's received images of participants from as far as Portugal, Egypt, Thailand, Israel, and Iraq. When asked how he attributes the overwhelming response by the international public he credits simple word of mouth from people that believe in his artistic vision.

"I've been amazed at the articulate answers and the level of creativity that I have received from such a simple question," says Hicks.

When asked about the steps to make *We All Are Global Nomads* a reality, Hicks says that it's a grassroots effort that developed into an ambitious piece. He adds that he's been fortunate to have the help of various individuals at the local and international level. At this point, *We All Are Global Nomads* boasts over ten project members that have lent their time, efforts, and talents to Hicks' art. "Since I have never taken on something like this before, I asked around for people that knew how to do certain things such as database, web design, and local, state field work."

Hick explains that all the equipment, the laptops and projectors that are being used for the inaugural exhibit are either borrowed, donated, or rentals. Though Hicks adds that he built the erectable 10-foot screens used for the event. "I'm hoping that later on the project will have its own equipment that we can take anywhere and install anywhere."

Hicks hopes to take his *We All Are Global Nomads* exhibit to other cities such as Houston, San Antonio, Montreal, and Vancouver. His goal is to take *We All Are Global Nomads* to various cities in Europe and Asia. Hicks wants to exhibit his artwork in cities where there are "areas of opportunities" and of course wherever there is anyone that will lend him a hand.

"We did a preliminary test run in Chiangmai, Thailand, but right now we're ready to do it here," says Hicks of the April 19 inaugural event.

Hicks depended on various local and state departments and organizations to bring *We All Are Global Nomads* to Austin. "I'm indebted to The Parks & Recreation Department for graciously waving the fee for the exhibit." He also credits and thanks the Texas Commission of the Arts for donating a large grant at the last minute. But not everything was simple.

"Unfortunately, the City of Austin refused to extend the curfew the night of our exhibit, but it's the sort of thing that's hard to break," says Hicks.

Hicks does admit that he's fortunate to have the City of Austin help out in making the event a reality. The city is even interested in bringing back his installation artwork as part of an upcoming event for the City of Austin's International Program. "The fact that they want my project to return to Austin as part of their International Program is great." Hicks anticipates that by that time, *We All Are Global Nomads* will have a successful track record touring around the world.

We All Are Global Nomads began April 19 at Republic Square Park, at the corner of 4th and Guadalupe. For more information, go to <http://www.weallareglobalnomads.com>.



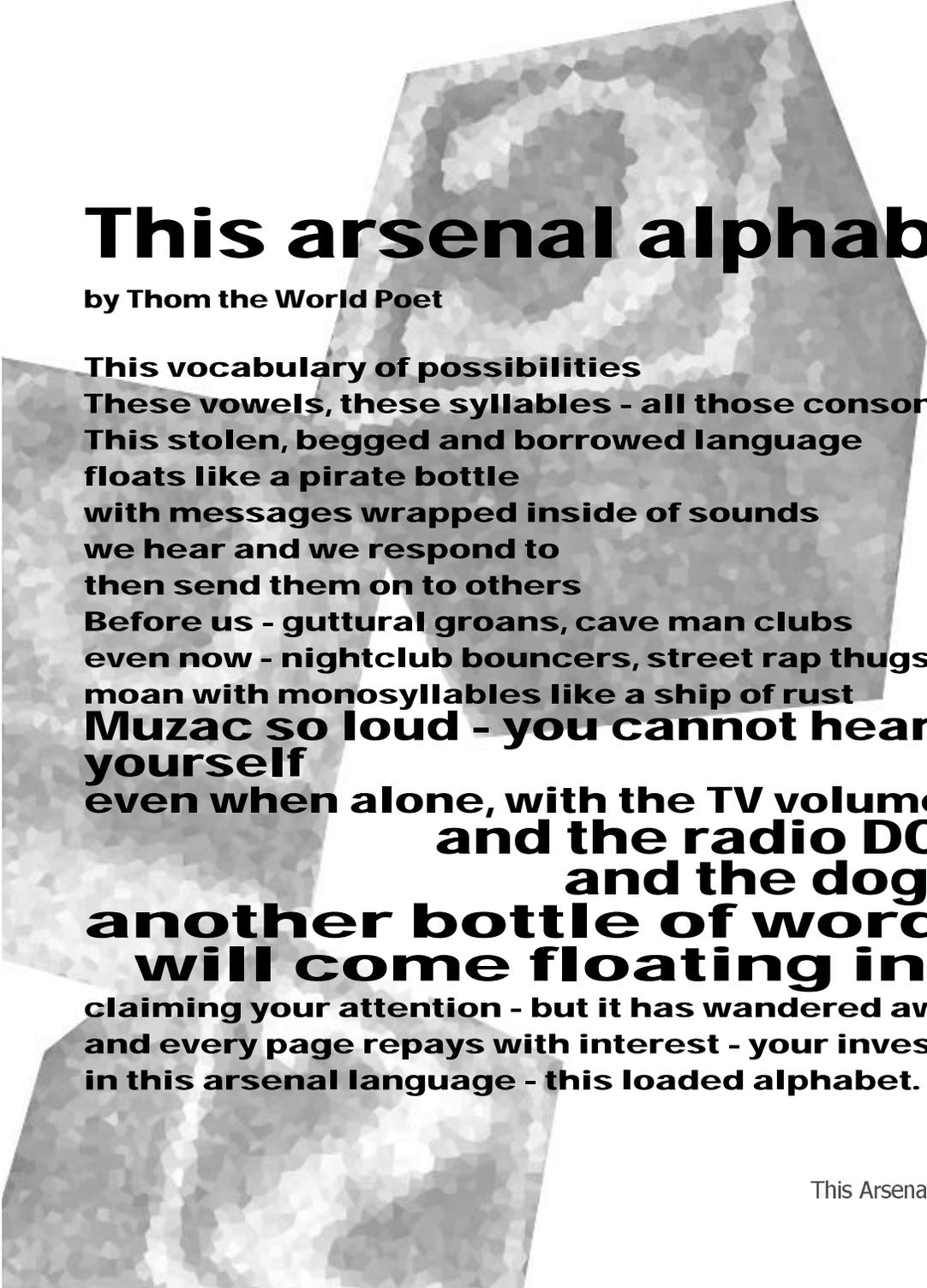
Global nomads by Thom the World Poet

in cafes, sipping coffees, watching
reading, writing in journals, travelling
crossing borders with every breath-expanding
growing into a world of broken frontiers
an expanding uni-verse still creating
We know who we are-and who our tribe is-
loose, unaffiliated, autonomous individuals
We step into a future with no fear
just a desire to see what happens next
Curiosity is our passport-we are not the past
We are this present moment.And the next
We will be visiting you soon--

blessed are the improvisers by Thom the World Poet

blessed are the improvisers
in art and image, fashion and form
who carry on beyond convention
who understand challenge and contradiction
who dialogue in conversation
preserving and extending civilisation
as more than history-more biology
alive as any nerve cell could ever be
blessed are the gentle ones
who listen more than they speak
who support more than they demand
who keep life alive, in their homes
blessed are the hidden weeds
who make in camouflage a golden garden
visible only to those who look
blessed are those who cause no pain
seek no gain, give more than they receive
blessed are those who do not need
yet are generous to those in loss
blessed are those who do not need to believe
who continue intrinsically
who love bravely and often
who heal and anneal
who intuit and feel
who make their dreams real
who are already blessed just by breathing
and beaming and becoming-blessed and bless-
ing
and being happy and hospitable
blessed be ye in all you do and are and see
and say
and may every way you choose
be blessed, too!





This arsenal alphabet

by Thom the World Poet

**This vocabulary of possibilities
These vowels, these syllables - all those consonants.
This stolen, begged and borrowed language
floats like a pirate bottle
with messages wrapped inside of sounds
we hear and we respond to
then send them on to others
Before us - guttural groans, cave man clubs
even now - nightclub bouncers, street rap thugs
moan with monosyllables like a ship of rust
**Muzac so loud - you cannot hear
yourself
even when alone, with the TV volume OFF
and the radio DOWN,
and the dog OUT
another bottle of words
will come floating in
claiming your attention - but it has wandered away
and every page repays with interest - your investment
in this arsenal language - this loaded alphabet.****

D I V E R S I O N S

VISUAL ART

Photography by Sybil Miller and Mark Goodman

St. Edward's University Art Gallery
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448-8620

May 15-June 15, Opens May 15 at 6pm

Hours: M-F 9am-6pm

Statesmen: Pictures from Fifty State Capitols, photos by Sybil Miller and *The Capitol in Capital Improvements*, photos by Mark Goodman will be on view.



New Works by Ann Huey and Debra Rueb

Women & Their Work Gallery
1710 Lavaca
477-1064

May 17-June 21, Opens May 17 at 6pm

Hours: M-F 9am-5pm, Sat. 12-4pm

www.womenandtheirwork.org

New works by Ann Huey and Debra Rueb will open on May 17 from 6-8pm, with an informal gallery talk at 6:30. Shown here: *Rene*, by Ann Huey.

FILM

Liminal Lumen: A Film Performance by Luis Recoder

Austin Museum of Art Downtown
801 Congress Ave.
Thursday May 22 at 7pm

Tickets: \$3-5

eshamaly@austin.rr.com

www.cinescape.cc

Luis Recoder skilfully weaves hand-manipula-

tions of film, sound, machine speed, and light in *Liminal Lumen*. He has also exhibited films at the New York Film Festival, the Viennale, the Rotterdam Film Festival, and the 2002 Whitney Biennale.

THEATRE

I Love Lysistrata

Ruta Maya Fountain Patio

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296-5439

Runs through May 18, Saturdays at 7pm and Sundays at 5:15.

Public Idiot Theater in association with Austin Against War presents *I Love Lysistrata*.

Adapted by Chris Krejci from the ancient Greek play by Aristophanes, *I Love Lysistrata* includes a protest, a puppet show, a sitcom, a sex farce, and a boxing match in a single act.

CLASSES

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Drypoint Class

Flatbed Press

477-9328

May 17, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Dallas artist and printmaker Lee Harrington will demonstrate image development and printing techniques in a drypoint engraving class on May 17, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Fee is \$120 plus cost of paper and copper. Learn more about Lee at <http://leeharrington.com>. To sign up, call or e-mail Katherine Brimberry at katherine@flatbedpress.com.

12:May/Jun03

Over the course of 5 years of Hip Hop Humpday and a promising debut album titled *Create & Hustle*, Bavu Blakes has made a name for himself as both a talented emcee and an intriguing social critic. With war raging in Iraq, Bavu was kind enough to share his views and feelings on our current situation.

Austin Downtown Arts: As a noted cultural spokesman, do you feel a responsibility to take a definite position on the war through your art?

Bavu Blakes: As a cultural spokesman, no, but as a human being, I'd be happy to share it with you. There's no war in my heart. I have love in my heart. But this war makes me feel guilty as an American, because the wars and world domination efforts that built our country and the Western world are responsible for our excellent economy and standard of living. I don't know if I'd have the multiple computer access or cell phone for you to reach me today without the rock-solid legacy of unnecessary deaths of many of our ancestors. I think humans and the world are evil in nature, and that's why "we" are at war.

ADA: Have you been addressing the war at all in any of your recent live performances or recordings?

**it's one thing to play
Mr. Anti-War Activist
while you hang out at
bars, and another
thing altogether to
admit that your
modern American
lifestyle is funded by
these wars.**

BB: I usually refer to it all on a greater scale, referencing our lifetime as the end of the world. But the answer is yes. I refer to it as a bad thing. But again, it's one thing to play Mr. Anti-War Activist while you hang out at bars, and another thing altogether to admit that your modern American lifestyle is funded by these wars.

BAVU BLAKES

on War and Responsibility

By Robert Gabriel

ADA: That reminds me of how white America should always be aware of the wealth and privilege that it has gained at the expense of Native Americans and Africans.

BB: I'm glad it reminds you of that, because that's what I'm talking about. And I think Africans in America, and even some Native Americans, though probably very few, have also gained wealth and privilege in the process.

ADA: So how far should such considerations go? In other words, if we as common citizens have no control whatsoever over what has happened in our nation's past as well as the wars being waged today, should our guilt be so strong that we should also feel a responsibility to correct such misdeeds?

BB: Yes. I think that's a very personal question, because I doubt that most people think that they are guilty in the first place. I think most people are either so blindly patriotic that they are virtually guilt-free, or so anti-war and/or anti-government that they think they're making up for their own socioeconomic reality. I think a lot of people who should feel guilty about their privileges are too busy protesting and feeling anti-establishment. Never mind the fact that many if not most of them are being this way because they can afford to be. It sounds cliché, but any true anti-American should be packing their bags. Anything else is basically support, even on a simple level like paying taxes and fees, or buying imported products.

ADA: So what other courses of action would you propose?

BB: Prayer, faith, and patience are the only options we have. There's no getting around the fact that God's in control of it all, not humans.

M of M part 1 by Aaron Sanders

I love my wife.
I need for that to continue.
In fact, I'd like to show the world how it feels.
It could change everything.
But how can I show anyone
the treasure of my everyday?
People, let alone nations
wouldn't know how to hurt anymore.
Everyone would be preoccupied
with lusty thoughts and naughty eyes.
The lucky ones would realize
that surrendering yourself
is a celebration of existence
and doing good
in service of another selflessly
giving yourself to love...
is the greatest feeling on Earth.
Enough reason to live
and be happy forever.
Just tonight I tucked her into sleep.
We locked our doors and felt safe.
I made myself look stupid
and she laughed.
I kissed her face and felt at home.
Her angelic blue eyes,
the soft freckled curve
of her shoulders,
the full and fingery redness of her hair
all worked in concert
to give me unspeakable joy.
She asked me to rub her back,
rolled over, and wrinkled everything.
She said she loved me and good night.
I said I love you and sweet dreams.
I took the four tips of my fingers
and I traced an unknown path
of infinity across her skin.
A path of soft surprises
I worked hard to learn.
An unknown adventure
on the way to sleep....
I want to give that feeling to the world.
I have to.
Things have to change.
I love my wife...
And I need for that to continue.

"A poem will haunt me until I get it down on paper. It will drive me crazy until I give it my full attention. Once that happens, I can continue on with life," says local poet and Walking Shadow Repertoire's director, Aaron Sanders.

The 29-year-old Sanders has been in the poetry circuit since the third grade and has recently decided to create a documentary about the Austin International Poetry Festival (AIPF), which ran from April 17 to April 21. The film is currently titled *Common Languages, Part I: Poetry and Peace*.

"After a year as the volunteer coordinator at the festival, I developed some powerful relationships that will aid in the film's development," he says. "Everyone's thoughts are currently centered around the Middle East crisis. Inevitably, that will be the film's focus. But I don't want to plan it all out. I want to be quizzical and let the poets teach me in the end."

The film's main focus is on five poets who are fol-

lowed during the festival. For additional material, Sanders has some 300 other poets he can choose among for interviews. The main issues will include methods for peace, whether military action is necessary, and the concept that the war and peace discussion is inescapable.

Along with filming, Sanders spent much of his time working the festival circuit promoting the film. "I want this film to be placed in the National Library of Congress. I want the United Nations to see it. This is the kind of information that belongs to everyone," says Sanders.

"Agnes Meadows, an English poetess, is the first person we'll be interviewing," he says. "She is an amazing woman who calls herself a nomad. She used to say that the love of her life lived in Palestine, so this situation is close to her heart. She has a wonderful personal style as well as a connection to the Middle East."

Another featured poet is Thom "The World Poet" Woodruff. "Thom is responsible for keeping locals informed on the war," says Sanders.

"He's a strong activist and a wealth of knowledge."

Peace Through Poetry

by Autumn Rhea



He's also been involved with AIPF since its inception and is now working to bring poets from overseas to read in San Antonio in tea rooms and at the Houston International Poetry Festival."

Susan Bright, Austin Women in Black member and editor of the Plain View Press, is yet another poet slated to appear in Sanders' film. "Susan is the most unafraid person that I know," says Sanders. "Her sense of urgency in her activism and determination is incredible. She also travels worldwide, spreading the word of the mistreatment of women and never falters."

Californian Larry Jaffe is the fourth poet in the film to be followed. "Larry is a wonderful man who strongly believes in dialog among civilians through poetry," says Sanders. "He organizes poetry readings worldwide and strives to gain the attention of the government and the media." Jaffe's local show "The Tim, Talaam and Larry Show" at Waterloo Ice House has become popular, due to the fact that the poets are comfortable with teasing each other and keeping the attitude light.

The final poet who will be included is Stazja McFadyen. "She publishes the Map of Austin Poetry (an online schedule of poetry events) although she is now an East Coast resident," said Sanders. "Stazja is central whether she's in town or not. One of her goals with her poetry is to promote a world without war."

When asked about his own "peace poetry" Sanders replied, "I'm pretty bad at it because I'm too involved and I don't have all of the information, which is never a good combination. The best poems focus on peaceful, loving decisions and bypass the ranting anger."

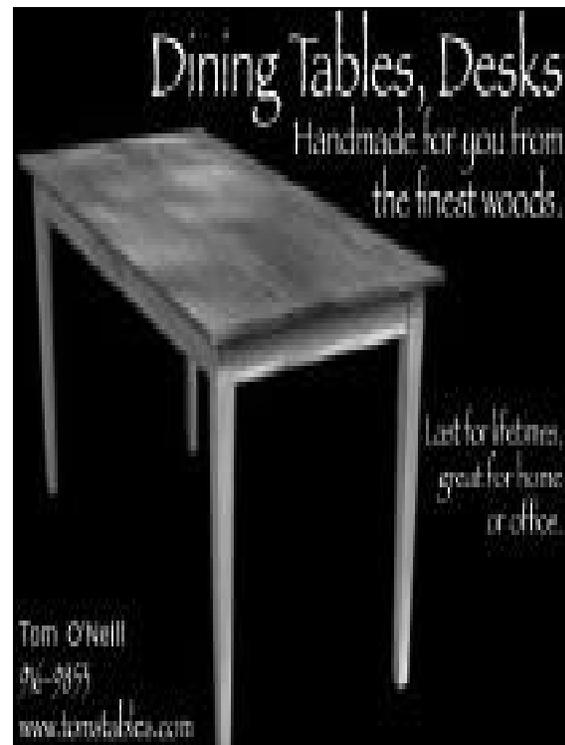
Sanders has utilized poetry in the past few months to deal with mixed emotions regarding the war in Iraq. "I think poetry can be used to create meaningful conversations among people and to create real solutions during this confusing time. Poets are often perceived as naive, because we rant and don't really present any answers. The base reasons for poetry and peace are to help people see where to start to make changes and to give life meaning. Don't we all just want to be safe and loved? I don't think it's un-patri-

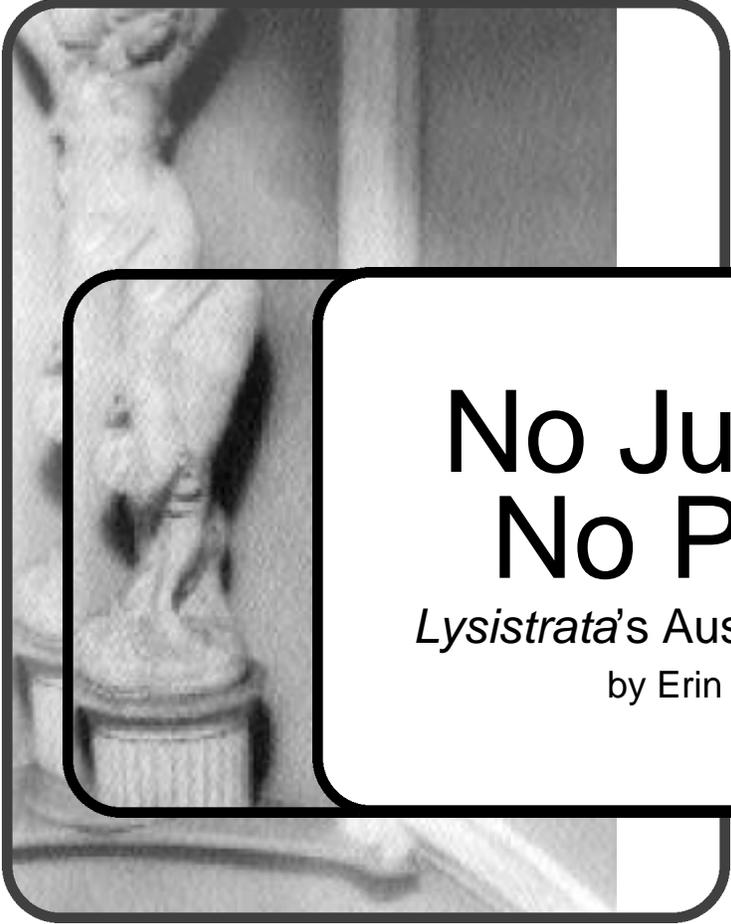
otic to strive to improve our lives."

For Sanders, poetry is solace. "I think people would need a lot less therapy if they would do more personal work," he says. "I am constantly evaluating myself and trying to work through sadness and anger. It's important to understand why these emotions exist. Poetry serves as a connection to other people as well. You can make the most important statement ever developed on Earth, but if no one hears it, it doesn't really matter."

Then why does mainstream America seem so disinterested in poetry? "I read somewhere that most people ignore most poetry because most poetry ignores most people. The problem is that many people's interests are not discussed," says Sanders. "My personal opinion is any poem that makes a solid connection with an audience member is a good poem."

Production of *Common Languages, Part 1: Poetry and Peace* began in April. For more information, contact Aaron at Walking_Shadow@hotmail.com.





No Justice, No Piece

Lysistrata's Austin Comeback

by Erin Steele

"'Tis cruel hard, by my faith, for a woman to sleep alone without her nooky."

So says Lampito in Aristophanes' anti-war comedy *Lysistrata*, a sturdily built Spartan woman who discovers that it's not always easy to take a stand. The play, which advocates the end of the Peloponnesian war, understands that the most important aspect of sex is what the denial of it can achieve; in the case of *Lysistrata*, the women's refusal to fulfill their husbands' needs incites discussions of peace.

And does life ever imitate art. Even thousands of years after Aristophanes penned his groundbreaking drama, its power transcends all time and language barriers, as demonstrated by the *Lysistrata* Project, an international theatrical event for peace that took place March 3. The project was conceived by New

York actors Kathryn Blume and Sharron Bower in January — as the threat of war with Iraq grew ever stronger — with hundreds of readings of the play set up in just a few weeks.

Austin was one location where the much-heralded project found a home; spearheaded by local John Howrey — a friend of Bower — *Lysistrata* took the stage of the packed Lounge, where it received an overwhelmingly warm reception. Directed by Robi Polgar and starring Katherine Catmull, Bernadette Nason and Jessica Hedrick, the hurriedly rehearsed event went off without a hitch.

"We gathered a bunch of actors who are trusted and known, and allowed them to work and allowed them to speak, rather than having to do the traditional performance, where it's rehearsed a lot, and everything is very specific and planned," Howrey said. "A read-

ing like this, in this type of forum and for this type of purpose, can be a little more free and open; we can allow the actors to get up there and do their work."

Howrey first became involved in the project through a little thing the Greeks might refer to as fate: a random phone call to his good friend Bower landed him in the role of the *Lysistrata* Project's Austin spearhead.

"I just called [Sharron] to chat one night and she told me about this thing she was starting," Howrey said. "We ended up talking for a really long time — at that point, war was seeming like more and more of a possibility. I said, 'I think the project sounds really great, let me know if I can help you in any way,' and a couple of days later she sent out a big mass e-mail announcing the project, and there I was listed as the Austin spearhead."

Though *Lysistrata* deals with war, the point of the project was not to draw comparisons to the events that were occurring in Iraq, but to encourage discussion about those events.

"I think for our purposes, it's not specifically addressing this war, although it obviously has to do with war in general," Howrey said. "I think what it does is open the door for communication and discussion, and talking about the whole situation in a different way. It's opening that door for debate and allowing people to have this opinion. I think more than specifically addressing the situation in Iraq, it's allowing the debate to happen, or at least it was the evening that we performed."

The goal of *Lysistrata* closely mirrors Howrey's own personal goal of prompting discussion about the events in the Middle East. He was alarmed to see that the people surrounding him — including his friends and family — had given very little thought to the situation overseas.

"More so now, you'll hear people having debates about the war if you go out and you're just listening to people. But back in January, that wasn't happening," Howrey said. "After I got involved with the project, I called my mother to tell her about it, and I didn't know what her stance was. She said she was very for peace; and I said, 'What about dad?' She said, 'I don't really know

what he thinks,' which struck me as very odd — that a married couple wasn't discussing it. I know they weren't the only ones — I don't want to pick on my parents. So I wanted it to be an opportunity for people to say, 'I heard about this thing and I'm really behind that.' And no matter what the other person says to them, it opens up the conversation about it, be it an anger-based, 'I can't believe you think that,' or an, 'Oh, I know.'"

Howrey soon realized that his efforts were not in vain; whether the feedback came from *Lysistrata* audience members, or his own friends, he realized that by acknowledging what could potentially happen in Iraq, the lines of communication became increasingly more open.

"I know in some respects I accomplished that, at least with my own friends — by talking with them about it, getting them involved, or not being able to get them involved, I opened up some of that communication," Howrey said. "A lot of people, when I first approached them, said, 'I really don't know what I think about that' — they weren't able to form an opinion. And I would say, you need to go figure it out, and here are some resources."

Many people took advantage of the *Lysistrata* Project as a resource; in fact, Howrey was forced to turn numerous theatergoers away because of the amount of people in attendance.

"It was really crowded, and I know that people in the back were irritated because they were in the back," Howrey said. "But I was so impressed with the energy that flowed through the room throughout the entire show. People were really into it, and there was such love and laughter at points where I didn't think there would be. Before it happened, it was crazy — so many people were entering, and it was just nuts. We worked our way right up to the fire code number, and had to turn away a bunch of people. People were so excited to see it; that's really how it felt the whole night."

Howrey received mostly positive feedback in response to the project — although those who were turned away had slightly more neg

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up all night

Harold McMillan

I'm not really sure, but I think this is the third one. The first one was a long time ago, so I could be mistaken. This feeling, though, this general way that everything feels seems very familiar to me. And, I'm pretty sure I need to have another one.

By all reasonable standards I had the first one when I was much too young. I was just past 25 years old. Things were going pretty much as planned. I was freshly graduated from college, pursuing a graduate degree at UT at I-35, married to a smart and enterprising artist-hippie-chick. I was doing the things I said I was gonna be doing, but I was also feeling the pressure to do more. Hit my marks early, keep moving. After all, 25 was the deadline for putting together the perfect life, lifestyle, and—most importantly—the perfect bank account. There was pressure to start a family, but my more-mature-than-my-years self relied on the internal logic of my life plan. The plan placed having kids just after achieving my list of personal perfections. As all of you know, adding kids to a family is something you do with careful planning. You have kids only when every other aspect of your life is perfect. Then you have an absolutely perfect child to join your perfect family. At least that was the way it was in my super logical, very mature early twenty-something mind.

This might surprise you—it surprised me—but life doesn't really work that way. My mature early twenty-something brain was full of heady leftovers from college days when I knew everything. And, damn, I was in my mid twenties and I had not eliminated world hunger, not established a lasting peace in the Mid East, nor convinced UT at I-35 that institutional racism IS alive and well on the 40 Acres. And, I was yet to play all of the blues dives in Austin.

Talking about feeling old and unaccomplished! I'd missed my chance to make a difference. How could I possibly settle down and start a family? Boom! I had my first one.

That's right friends; I had my first mid-life crisis in my mid twenties. I felt so...old. My life was supposed to be on track: everything was all laid out. I was working on the master plan and all of the sudden I realized I was in the wrong graduate school. So I got out. Then my wife realized she was in the wrong marriage, so she got out. Then I real-

ized that my perfectly planned life was going all wrong. I had passed 25 and, look at all of the time I'd wasted. I had to do something.

So, I bought a motorcycle, became a full-time musician, and tired to sleep as little as humanly possible. I didn't want to miss anything. I was reclaiming my life, right?

After a couple of years, external forces and some amount of volition steered me back closer to the middle. With some work, I finally started to again feel comfortable with my age, accomplishments, and my station in life. Up until I was 30, I had to work at not feeling old. After 30 it started to sink in that I was still a young man and had time to "make something" of my life. After a few years of working and playing hard, at 35 I was finally convinced that the "plan" was back on track.

I had gone back to graduate school in the right department. I was doing work that was propelled by my passion. I was successful at reclaiming some of my idealism, yet I was less so an angry young man. I had matured and things were going OK for me. I was in a relationship with another hippie-artist chick and I was set to get married again and live happily ever after. Back on task of putting together the perfect family.

Well I got the graduate degree, was getting to play in all of the live music dives in town, and the work was going well. I found myself planning a wedding. And, you guessed it; the bottom fell out of everything. Boom! I lost the lease on my house, which was also my office. My girl decided to run away with the piano player. Dumped me. I fell hard. Right on my ass. Mid-life crisis number 2.

I don't know that it was a conscious decision, but my second mid-life crisis proved to be a lot less outwardly extreme. I didn't go wild and crazy like I did the first time. My thirty-something crisis was a very quite one. I took a couple of years to actually "feel" the crisis, to ponder, to deal with depression and loss. That time of sitting with myself, I think, was actually helpful. I gained some strength. I learned a lot about and decided on some ways to be. After all, it was still a bit early for a real mid-life crisis. I wasn't even 40 yet. so I still had something to look forward to.

But after that one, the time clock was ticking loud enough for me to hear it clearly. I reached the point that I was really ready to settle down and

start a family. Just like in the master plan. I was consciously, for the first time in my life, thinking about wanting to become a parent. I had matured enough to know that one really can't wait until all aspects of life are totally perfect. But I felt up to the challenge of planning for the long term, I wanted to get some place and stay put. I wanted to find a good partner, grow up a kid, and have us provide a home for the family. I finally was on track again. A little older than some of my friends embarking on the same journey, but loving the notion none-the-less.

Well, even at forty-something one can't live just in a notion. My partner and I couldn't agree on much more than wanting to be parents. I got kicked out of the notion, and the house to boot. But hey, we have this wonderful little boy-soul birthed and ready to take on the future. So, once again, BOOM!

The first two should be considered my warm-ups. It's now time for the real deal. I deserve a legitimate traditional, worry-free, and extravagant period of neo-adolescent folly. I am ready for what every red-blooded American male over 40 has a right to: A big ole stupid mid-life crisis. Maybe I should buy an old sports car fixer-upper. Maybe I should get another motorcycle for me and the boy to tool around on. Maybe that extended trip to Europe that I never got to take when I was 21. Hayes could live on the road with me, all over Europe and Africa, take a year out of school and get a real cultural education. Or, get this; maybe it's time to stop this art/culture stuff. I could get a new job, start a totally new career in sales or something, maybe even join a traveling circus band. The options should be limitless.

Instead of pondering my well-deserved folly, I'm concerned that unemployment is higher than it's been in a generation. I'm worried that the proposed cure for this sick economy is another round of tax cuts for the wealthy. The federal deficit is the most in history and growing, just three years after the largest surplus in history. The nation has lost over a million jobs since the last round of federal tax cuts. I am a good American, but I am a bit concerned about the long-term effects of our most recent short, but very bloody war. I'm worried that there might be another evil nation out there that may soon need the US to come and liberate it from it's self. I'm worried that the country's new found thirst for Empire Status will make international travel for Americans unsafe—at best a lot more risky—for years to come.

Damnit, I've worked hard for this mid-life crisis and I deserve a clear head with which to enjoy it. But NO. At a time when the nation can't afford health care for its citizens, is cutting funds for education, arts and culture programs; as the divide between rich and poor, between the races, grows deeper and wider; as we continue to afford to spend more money on the military than all of the earth's other nations COMBINED; as the momentum in these directions get stronger and stronger, I'm more than a little bit worried about NOW, let alone the future.

So, it now is clear to me, I can't enjoy this personal mid-life crisis for myself. I am more concerned about the future into which I am sending Hayes, my 5-year-old son.

Time for a re-calibration. I think the focus of the New American Century should turn to the needs of our families, right here at home.

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ative things to say — which deepened his belief that art can make a difference in day-to-day lives.

"As I was setting up the music equipment, this old Jewish couple came up to me, and they were so pleased because of their connection to Israel; they were very upset by this war going on," Howrey said. "They just felt like they had to come. It wasn't their normal thing to do — they wouldn't normally come out to this kind of Protest Theater — and they so obviously enjoyed it. There was also a guy who called at around 6 o' clock the night of the show. He said that a friend of his was in Switzerland, and had seen the *Lysistrata* Project there and had called him and said, 'You have to find one in your town and go to it.'"

It is estimated that hundreds of thousands of people participated in the *Lysistrata* Project, and that over \$100,000 was raised for various peace

organizations around the world. Times of war have traditionally resulted in great art — think the World War II-inspired neorealist movement, or the protest songs created in response to Vietnam — and these times, it seems, are no different.

"I think obviously the arts are very important," Howrey said. "In the case of *Lysistrata*, we get to look back many, many thousands of years, back to when the play was written, and learn something from a culture that was so on top of it in many respects. And they learned a lot from their own war. I think in some ways they were more civilized than we are. The arts are always important; we can learn a lot from them."

Missed the *Lysistrata Project*? Public Idiot Theater in association with Austin Against War presents Chris Krejci's one-act adaptation of Aristophanes' play called *I Love Lysistrata*. See Diversions on page 12 for more information.

