



leviathan

a forum for jewish expression at uc santa cruz

Activism

Identity

Environment

Immigration

Revolution

art photography news poetry essays





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editor's word

So I walked into the Press Center after Roz Spafford had suggested I try working for the understaffed *Leviathan* and met with Robin Chanin, print adviser. She explained to me that the newspaper needed someone to take the reins; someone with a bold new vision for the future of one of this country's oldest running student Jewish newspapers. I told her that I had no experience in Journalism whatsoever, but that I could write, and that I'd be able to throw some new ideas into the mix that might serve to broaden the appeal of the newspaper to a larger range of readers. For one, we have this new format: four color high gloss magazine style cover, and pretty high grade paper inside. We're kind of modeling this after LA's student Jewish magazine, *Ha'am*.

Thanks *Ha'am*. Second, we decided to try to include as many new kinds of work representing Jewish expression as possible. This meant

a cutback in lengthy articles and an increase in poetry, prose, photography, and personal essays; anything that expressed the thoughts of an individual Jewish mind.

In discussing the future of *Leviathan* with the staff, we agreed to the importance of recognizing Jewish expression in addition to Jewish opinion (which is an expression, but flowed like suburban sprawl over the land of the *Leviathan*, somewhat unregulated).

With this in mind, it does me great honor to present to you the spring issue of *Leviathan*. We welcome all submissions. Email them to leviathan@cats.ucsc.edu or drop them in the *Leviathan* mailbox at the Press Center. Enjoy.

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Activism with a Beat

CHARLENEQUARESMA

AARONSELVERSTON

WITH FRESH BEATS AND A NEW IMAGE, PHIL COFFIN AND THE LIBERATION DRUMMERS MARCH FOR SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CHANGE

Leviathan: You've chosen to start a socially and politically active group, but why through music?

Coffin: Music has always been a central part in social movements, and is an essential part of the human experience.

Leviathan: So you've been a musician for quite some time?

Coffin: Oh yeah. Early on, when I was down in LA, I learned a lot of West African drumming and later did a lot of song-writing for local activist groups. I've always thought that pure music is political.

Leviathan: How did you end up getting involved in marches and demonstrations?

Coffin: I really got involved with drumming for activism when I met up with Art and Revolution a year ago in Seattle for a weekend of demonstration training. We marched through the streets of downtown Seattle with

actors, dancers, and giant puppets, all marching to reclaim the streets for the people (*chuckle*). The streets are for community, not corporations. It was very power-



ful to hear the drums echo off the skyscrapers.

Leviathan: When you came to UCSC, how did you go about organizing Liberation Drummers?

Coffin: The first place I went was to SOAR, where I began to put up flyers. I also talked to people at drum circles. Our first Liberation Drummers circle was in the Porter Meadow; we had about 25 people show. Right now we've got 10-12 pretty dedicated drummers.

Leviathan: What is the Liberation Drummers' mission?

Coffin: To teach each other drums beats in a cooperative environment, then take it to the streets to inspire change.

Leviathan: What events have Liberation Drummers performed at so far?

Coffin: We've done five marches: May Day, Millions for Mumia, one against police brutality, one against urban military training, and a holiday parade. We also played on Earth Day in San Lorenzo park with Network Electric, and on Free Radio (96.3). We also did the Affirmative Action and TA Strike marches on campus, and have done a few poetry readings.

Leviathan: What's next for the group?

Coffin: Well, the school year is coming to a close, so we'll only have one more gig before next fall. Come check out the Santa Cruz Carnival on June 5, downtown. Also, every Friday at 5:00pm outside Kresge we practice, and all are welcome to come join. For more info email parkm@cats.ucsc.edu.

The Liberation Drummers will be reorganizing next fall with a new leader and will collectively study new approaches to their performance, perhaps in the style of the rhythm group STOMP.

Slam Poetry

KARINA IOFFEE

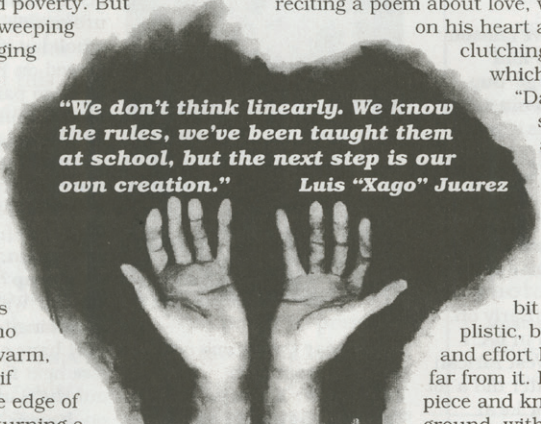
Among the lettuce, broccoli and artichoke fields of the Central Coast lies a region where the climate is mild, soil plentiful, crop abundant and the median income no higher than \$25,000. It is a place where thousands of immigrants have made a home—whether just for the season or for multiple generations, in towns with ringing names such as King City, Salinas and Freedom. Yet despite their success in the agriculture industry, these places have also come to be synonymous with gang violence, drugs and poverty. But a new movement sweeping the area is challenging these associations, powered by one of the most underrepresented groups in the US—minority youth. A national phenomenon manifesting itself on a local level, poetry slams are attracting teens more than ever, who are drawn by the warm, entertaining, even if slightly competitive edge of these events. It is turning a trip to the local coffeehouse into more than just an occasion to socialize with friends and guzzle caffeine. Instead it gives youth a chance to voice their concerns and make a statement about the world they live in.

First started in Santa Cruz in early 1998, the Youth Poetry Slam has most recently been extended to the Salinas community, where local kids can be spotted crowding the Cherry Bean coffee shop nearly every Saturday. The typical crowd inside is made up of mostly Mexican kids, although there are a few older people scattered here and there. They talk loudly among themselves, lowering their voices only when Slam

Granny, the organizer of the event and slam poet veteran, climbs on stage. "Attention, attention," she says in a voice that is simultaneously urgent and soothing and proceeds to explain the rules of the game. It's simple: judges are selected among members of the audience and are given slips of paper to record the performers' scores. Then, after each piece is performed, the judges grade the slammers on a basis of content, presence and delivery.

A young man with a mustache begins reciting a poem about love, with one hand on his heart and the other clutching the paper from which he is reading. "Darling, I can't stop thinking about you," he says with his eyes closed. "you've got my heart and stomach in a knot." The words are a bit trite and simplistic, but the emotion and effort he puts in are far from it. He concludes his piece and kneels close to the ground, with one hand extended, as if trying to touch his invisible love interest. The audience smiles and nods, identifying with his situation. They've all been there before.

Moments later, a group of Latinas are pushing their somewhat shy friend with closely cropped hair and glossy red lips onto the stage, saying, "Si, puedes" (Yes, you can) and "Va" (go). Hesitantly she lifts herself out of her chair, perhaps emboldened by her compañeras, and goes on to perform a piece about growing up in a world of white stereotypes. It takes her a couple of moments, but soon she's feeling slightly more at ease. Her words, in contrast, are hard and cold, and



"We don't think linearly. We know the rules, we've been taught them at school, but the next step is our own creation."

Luis "Xago" Juarez

for a couple of moments the entire room is mesmerized by her every syllable.

"We create our own literature," says Luis "Xago" Juarez, who regularly hosts the Youth Slam at the Washrock in Santa Cruz, of his fellow performers. "We don't think linearly. We know the rules, we've been taught them at school, but the next step is our own creation."

Yet Juarez, who only recently transferred to UC Santa Cruz, didn't always have such an opportunity. Growing up in East Salinas during the '80s, he remembers the economic hardships of the Reagan era hitting the community- and the lack of jobs and the rise in prices which followed. Even the school curriculum was cut. "I remember the first thing to go was music education," says Juarez, who played the trumpet in a school band. According to him, this was the time that many youth started getting involved in alcohol, drugs and crime. "There were always fights, but people never got killed," he says. "Then [in the late '80s] guns arrived in our community and the homicide rate went through the roof."

But guns weren't the only thing that "arrived" in East Salinas. Others got caught up in selling drugs, quickly realizing the profit-making potential of dealing narcotics. According to Juarez, it was easy for teenagers to succumb to the culture of drugs and violence because there were no alternatives. "People turned to crank, cocaine, and other things to escape what they say everyday," he says.

And while Salinas still has its fair share of problems, many of these same kids are channeling their anger and frustration in a more positive way - poetry. On one particular night, "Xago", as Juarez is known in the slam community, begins the event with a piece about Chiapas. As he saunters back and forth before his audience, his arms are in constant motion, gesticulating wildly, face full of expression, eyes glowing with intensity. His piece is about oppression, mildly rap-like and peppered with Spanish, but the audience follows his every word. When he's done, they break out in applause, whistling

and shouting in praise.

Juarez views poetry as a tool for dealing with issues facing him and his peers, kids trapped between two worlds, of Mexican heritage and an American upbringing. He also views it as a powerful medium which in the right hands can change the status quo. "Poets have a responsibility to their community," Juarez says, adding that his role is to raise awareness in all who listen to him slam. "If artists can empower the people,

***"If artists can empower
the people, then we will
have true democracy."***

Luis "Xago" Juarez

then we will have true democracy."

In addition to hosting the Santa Cruz slams, the 26 year-old also spends a lot of time writing lyrics for Baktun-12, a Salinas based hip-hop poetry group whose subject matter often turns political. The group has performed in and around the Santa Cruz area, drawing audiences with their impassioned skits on issues such as affirmative action, immigration, and minority rights. Frank Sanchez, who started the group two years ago, calls it "agit [agitation]-prop theater," a style he claims was adopted to lean on the consciousness of the community. "It gets kids off the street," he says, "and provides them with an [alternate] opportunity."

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 22 percent of children under 18 years of age live in poverty in the Monterey County, the majority of whom are of Latino or Mexican descent. And from the 4,054 Hispanic families living below the poverty level in Monterey County, more than half call Salinas home. A town dotted with farms and factories, it remains isolated from other cities in the Monterey County. Only a couple of dusty stretches of highway lead in and out of the town, but for the most part, it steps in its own juices. "It is a passive community," Juarez says of his hometown,

"where the Mexicans are the silent majority."

But instead of just living with the problems of his neighborhood, he is confronting them head on. "I'm the product of this society," Juarez says, "but I am also damn proud to have made it this far." Mark Cabrera, a member of Baktun-12, agrees. "It's all about survival," says the East Salinas native. "Early on, I had to learn to defend myself because in that neighborhood it's either do or die."

Now it's kids like Cabrera and Juarez who are changing the fates of their community through direct involvement in a cause that combines theatrics and a political edge. "We're trying to enlighten and spread awareness to all, but especially our own community," says Cabrera of his group's work. "We're the ones who work the hardest to bring our people up because we're tired of hearing it [our community] represented as a war zone."

What is it that makes these kids so darn political? They might not exactly be your average political animals, but listen to a few of their poems and you'll soon hear one thing in common: race relations and the marginalization of minority communities. "Kids of color are more aware of race because they constantly have

to explain themselves," she says. "And there is still a lot of anger and confusion, which makes it easy for personal issues to become political issues."

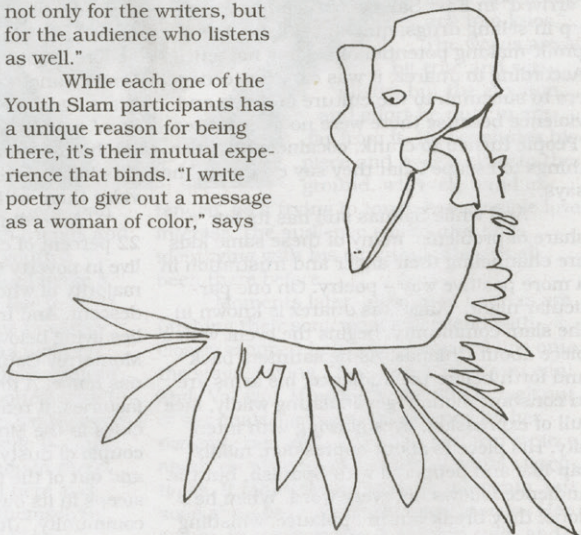
Reasons for involvement may differ, but none can deny the power slam bestows on its participants. Instead of just scribbling poetry in a journal to be witnessed by only the writer, slam ensures that all poets, be they beginner or master, have a chance to share their poetry. It goes beyond artistry (although that is always appreciated) and into the realm of political activism. "Once you release the word, it becomes all the more powerful," says Chicago-based poet Monica Copeland, who was recently in Santa Cruz to teach a slam poetry workshop. "It's not only for the writers, but for the audience who listens as well."

While each one of the Youth Slam participants has a unique reason for being there, it's their mutual experience that binds. "I write poetry to give out a message as a woman of color," says

Olivia Martinez, a UC Santa Cruz senior. "My experience [as a Latina] is one of being very silent," she says, adding that the usual stereotypes didn't make her early years, some of which were spent in South Central Los Angeles, any easier. "Growing up, I had no place to speak, but it is through poetry that I've been able to bring out my feelings."

But just how effective are these slams when it really comes down to it? Will crime rates go down, income levels up, just because a group of kids get together once in a while to read their poetry? To many who agree that awareness is the first step to bringing about change, the answer is

SLAM POETRY Continued
on Page 9



Unfolding Environmentalism

ALEXAARON

LORINTRODERMAN

My attendance at Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life Leadership training institute on February 19-22, 1999, has been a life changing, beneficial experience. Earlier this year I traveled to Washington D.C. and discovered Judaism's intense connection with the environment. The first two nights on the East Coast were spent at YMCA Camp Letts on Chesapeake Bay. On that Sabbath weekend I met amazing people who shared two very deep interests of mine, Judaism and the Environment. I was astounded to hear of the progress these people had made in their communities. From naturalists preserving native plant communities and organic farmers who follow the Talmud and let their fields fallow every seven years to activists saving communities from air pollution and lawyers fighting to protect creation by attempting to set limits on genetic engineering, I met many honorable people. During this weekend, I felt my Jewish heritage come to life and I felt incredibly

proud to be part of a large family of conscious, caring and dedicated people. I was overwhelmed by strong feelings of kinship.

On Sunday Morning, my new "family" and I boarded a school bus and headed towards the Capitol. We stayed at the Mayflower Hotel, went to environmental leadership seminars and attended portions of the Spitzer Forum. When we first arrived at the hotel, we heard Shimon Perez speak.

It was a gift to hear an influential voice in world politics speak. He

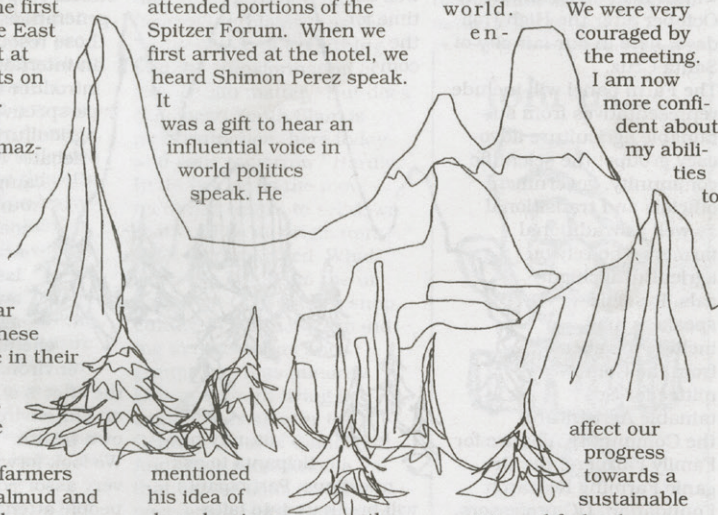
mentioned his idea of developing the Gaza Strip into agricultural land (possibly strawberries), providing employment opportunities for both the Israelis and Palestinians. The next day our group went to the Department of the Interior and spoke to Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt and Environmental Protection

Agency Administrator, Carol Browner. It was encouraging to be able to speak to important officials from a religious standpoint about our environmental beliefs. They were very supportive of our movement and shared many of our environmental concerns. They told us that groups such as ours make an impact in the legislative world.

We were very encouraged by the meeting. I am now more confident about my abilities to

affect our progress towards a sustainable

society and feel a deeper connection with Judaism. Since the institute in February, I have stayed in contact with the local COEJL chapter. We are organizing a one-day symposium focusing on the use of chemicals and biotechnology in agriculture,



its environmental effects and the role and responsibility communities have toward our environmental health. This symposium will have one keynote speaker and three panels: Farm, Policy, and Religious. This symposium was inspired by the leadership training in Washington D.C. and Chesapeake Bay and much of the brainstorming

for this project was conducted during special discussion sessions in Washington D.C. The symposium will be held on a Sunday in October after the High Holidays, here in our fair city of Santa Cruz.

The Farm panel will include representatives from sustainable agriculture advocacy groups, the scientific community, government officials and transitional as well as traditional farmers who rely on agricultural chemicals. Possible speakers may include members from the Committee for Sustainable Agriculture, the Community Alliance for Family Farmers, the Organic Farming Research Foundation, UC professors, Plant Pathologists, and other agricultural representatives.

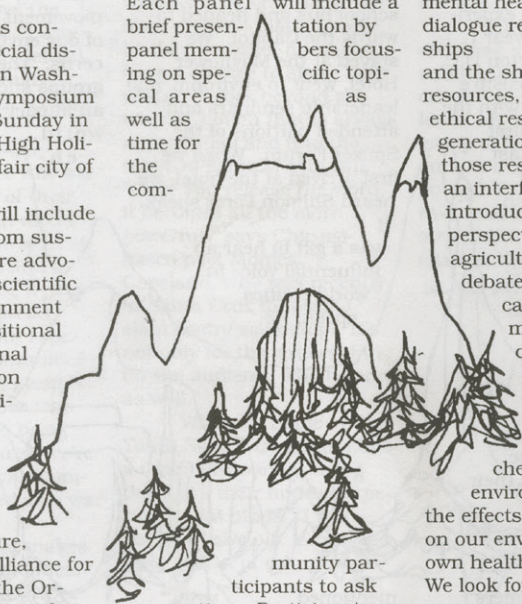
The Policy panel will include local politicians, local grassroots political advocacy groups, and representatives from the biotechnology industry as well as advocates for chemical free farming.

The Religious panel will bring together representatives of the major faiths in our community addressing their specific outlook on responsibility toward the community's environmental health in regards to agricultural chemicals and the ethics involved in creation and stewardship of the earth.

Each panel will include a brief presentation by panel members focusing on special areas as well as time for the community participants to ask questions. Participants will break up into faith-based caucus groups to discuss future organizing efforts. The day will culminate with an action-oriented program; either a specific letter writing campaign or other policy targeted action to take back to participants' respective communities.

There are many goals for this project: to foster dialogue and communication between those who own agricultural land and the community that relies on their produce (it is not uncommon for people to be unaware of the earth to food connection). To create partnerships and coalitions between existing advocacy groups for environmental health. To initiate dialogue regarding partnerships and the sharing of natural resources, as well as the ethical response to future generations regarding those resources. To build an interfaith coalition, and introduce faith based perspectives into the agricultural/chemical debate. To organize the campus and community to form coalitions and take action on these issues. To foster awareness of agricultural chemicals in the environment. To explore the effects of these chemicals on our environment and our own health.

We look forward to seeing a very assorted crowd of people attending the symposium: Students and activists interested in Environmental Issues, students interested in faith based community organizing, local advocacy institutions, local politicians, farmers and local community residents. This symposium will bring together students and the



local community to understand the ethical dilemmas of chemical agricultural farming, explore Jewish and other faith based approaches to this dilemma and create coalition based actions to remedy this health hazard to this and future generations. Students will be targeted for their current involvement in environmental activism as well as their connection to advocacy and religious groups.

Students will be involved in the organizing and implementing of the symposium as well as participating in the panel presentations. The symposium will address the moral/ethical position of our role as stewards of the land and in the community. The Jewish position relative to this ethical dilemma will be clearly articulated by members of each panel as well as a keynote speaker, who will address the morality of our current policy as well as the future effects of these policies on our environment and our children.

Finally, the overarching goal of this conference is to create dialogue, coalitions and actions that foster communications with local policy makers, landowners and those who live in the community. 🍌

Alex Aaron will have 14 organic children on his organic strawberry farm on the banks of the organic river between here and there.

Slam Poetry (cont'd)

yes. "As long as people are listening and understanding," Bañales says, "a goal has been achieved."

According to a legend, the Mayan calendar ends in the year 2012, when a new world, with its own set of principles, values and moral codes inherits the earth. Baktun-12, from which the group borrows its name, is the last part of this calendar, on the brink of something unknown and mysterious. Frank Sanchez, under whose direction the group has flowered, explains it as the "culmination of everything and the transformation of energy into matter." But does this mean Youth Slam is near extinction, here today and gone tomorrow? Hardly. In its two years the movement has begun to set down roots unlike its originators have ever imagined. What was once limited to the urban, East Coast coffee shop culture is gradually expanding to other areas and groups, such as minority kids and youth living in small towns all over the Central Coast of California. And while there's still a lot that can be done to aid impoverished communities and their residents, slam poetry is a step forward. They might not have direct representation in Congress or any other branch of the federal government, but they refuse to be silenced. Above all, they refuse to be stereotyped and molded into what others say

they should be. "Slam is a movement where you've got Chicano students doing something they are not supposed to, and that is speaking up," says Bañales, a second generation Mexican-American and is a student at UCSC. "What these kids are doing is incredibly bold and daring because they are challenging the system with which they have been raised." 🍌

Karina Ioffe is a hovercraft between the planes of insanity and control freakdom. She's either just insane, or just too sane.

join us...



we'll need you
next fall.

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Four Months To The Day

I carried the harmonica like I knew
it was the only treasure my father would ever give me
and I curled up in the wrinkles of his velour shirt,
the jointy triangles of my ten year old arms
poking dimples into his body,
and felt the heat of his whiskey coated breath
as he wheezed Sunrise, Sunset
into the fading summer light—
I slid sleepily from his lap
and was jolted from the solitude of the music
as my father stood up
and yelled in a voice
that was doom
that was order
that was fright
because Jacob clattered the plate too hard on the table.

Everything went watery with tears.

Now I flip him off where he can't see
a sheltered five hundred miles away
and I'd rather gaze at the picture of my dead grandmother,
a disembodied head floating in an oval
on the cheap paper they used for the eulogy
than pay attention to him telling me what's best.

Speaking of my grandmother
(even though nobody wants to hear it
and they all wipe their hands through their hair
and sigh because I'm talking again.

Again.

Only a few mock sincerity from behind their stoned gazes.)

Speaking of her I should tell you
that the smell of her hair spray seared through my nose
and I had to let go a little sooner than she wanted—
We edged outside and sidled down the painted pink steps,
waving to her while simultaneously
grumbling to one another about how late it was.
She retreated into her lonely apartment.

I wonder just
how
raw

my mom felt
packing her mother's life into a U-haul.

Meanwhile I scowl,
dissatisfied and afraid,
and wait for someone who doesn't make me tremble,
someone to unravel me,
someone to heal the insignificant wounds of adolescence
and the longing I have to give my grandma just
one
more
gentle word,
someone to soothe the anger that splits my temples
into chambers
when I think of how my father's tight lips
never managed to say "I love you."

So I'm gonna pack a thousand different emotions
into one
sweet
container
and leave,
a year without Santa Monica skylines
and LA freeway signs
and walking to Sav-on
and AM radio static on the way to Target
and manicured lawns and their matching
tight-faced neighbors
who waved hello to my father
when he came home from work
smelling of sweat and Old Spice.

I know in ten years when you die, Mom,
I'll feel so guilty because I left you
to rattle around in the death of your mother
all by yourself
(the grief you pretend not to feel
already pounds against the blood of your ulcer)
I'm just trying not to be so strung out, Mom
I'm trying to be happy

--abby fisher

Stopping the blood shed
by bringing in more troops
massacres by NATO
Its leadership role

killing in the name of humanity

that's the U. N. 's way
for You and me
we don't stand a chance
by trying to end such circumstance

in times of yore we had Hitler's gore
now in modern times we have
the foes of Bosnia and Kosovo

death like stench does rise
as bodies

drop
like
flies

Serbs
strikes
down
anything
that
moves



NATO forces attacking like killer bees
while the governments that fund these wars
laugh with glee

here in the united states
we hear and read
beware of the man
with the blue in his turban

while cash bounties

Controlled with an iron fist



mac hillenbrand

for
shooting
down
allied air crafts
is the chronic thoughts of Saddam Hussein
destabilization of the mighty demon
we the people of the united states
is his cry of vengeance

Many died in Vietnam
in fact

two child hood
friends of mine One a priest
and one
that wished I was older

were shot down
by the viet cong

in cold blood
A manufactured event
not a war at all

many men and women
go running whenunclesam
startstocall



the gulf war
traded blood
for oil
in Iraq today
this is found
to still be the way

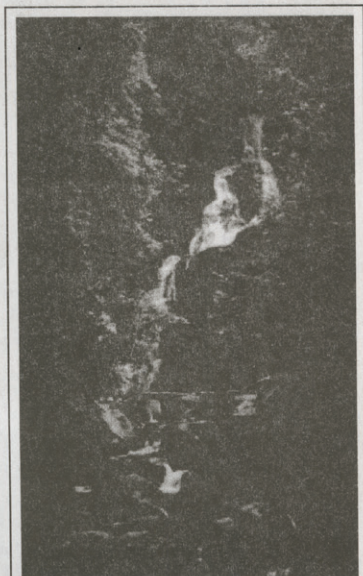
Africa knows
all so well
the sounds of wars death cry

native Americans
on their own native soil

inflicted upon them

that there was no need for

demonstrators
from around



mac hillenbrand

died in a war

the world
fight the fight

for civil

environmental

and gay rights



justice

Shunned
condemned
for fighting
the fight

isthery
onthelips
ofthosethat die

we simply
don't trust
the president

Lets here it
for all those
brave sweet souls
that purposefully
march into harms way

no one knows
how long
they will have to stay

in a war

that could go on till doomsday

nor how quickly with there lives

they will have to pay



mac hillenbrand

soft
cool and
speckling
radiating
light stick
sphinx kisses
on your eyelids

your hand on my heart
swallowing the deeper
of two geometric patterns
two separate life diseases
I have lived in
that you ask for
but only diluted
(I cannot dilute them
they are bleeding as they are,
open sores and bullet skull wounds
effortlessly sinking into
American refugee
cyanide camps
death camps)
egyptian shawl IBM
sumerian baseball cap listening

kaleidoscopes, orange peels
frowns, smiles,
laughter tears crust,
molten granite shells
virgin flowers
maiden petal dresses rose
buds, thorns
curved like ridges and shark's
teeth malnourished touching your
feet toes calluses
sticking into them

your spit thrust fire
containing shadows
stretching into ambivalent angles
ridiculous paint brush tips flattened
etched deeply into
the black oval almond that
crusts over and
surrounds the constant
changing of the way I
see your touch
one minute it's too much

and the next not nearly enough

(deep in this transparent
translucent coinhabitation
of flesh and bones
between the marrow of
a smile, with teeth
all out of place and
teeth all held together

I hold this collection of unstable pallet letters
24 symbols)

your hands, ellipses,
cracked volcanic ash tases
your hand on my
heart, watching me
tear it out gently beating
still beating human deficient
untrusting heart
ripping it out, tearing at
the roots of my life rotting;
cupping,
circling, entwining your
fingers together at knuckles
EMERGENCY EXIT
bruised skinned knuckles
1039 smooth(ed out
slappy hours)

you cup my head
just above your breast
trying to smooth down
my wave tossed hair
curls that twist into another place
into demon shapes
trying to escape
unable to watch trees grow
to let go

the luminescent arrows of straight pointing
paths I have not chosen

(and the way she says that to me
why can't you see
the love behind these eyes
god knows I've tried
to convey it since
the second you tunneled
light thrust waves)

(light travels in waves, constant
up down motion spirals that

cannot be reflected or refracted ever (ever)
when we look at one another
its stare deep down
takes your image and
flips it distorted)

be that
and he could see you
not with the shallowness
of Adam's eyes and ribs
but eyes where we can
begin and end anew
inside each other
everyday
find refuge in new beginnings
without clothes
and apples, without knowledge
and orange peels and
puddles of tears
floods of tears
carrying houses away
in the drift

oh do not drift
oh do not doubt
this old sincerity
be that
and I begin anew
in you
the past ten minutes
fifteen minutes
nineteen years
my past wiped away
in jars filled seashells
boxes I glue my childhood dreams to
"maybe your diamond ladie eyes have robbed me blind"
in a time where sunshine glistens not off
but from my more curved surfaces
glossy film coated rubbing tiger's eyes
hunting warrior red streaks
places where I can hand my heart
at 11:45 or 10:39
A.M. or P.M.

(awaking inside her I
crawl to my fingers
bruising my knees
my skin rubbing against
bristles of leg
angles and curves I dare not
direct only move with

the spinning and filter
out of control)

I have visited a beach
made of nothing but stone
small round pebbles
"As small as the world...
as large as alone"
collected handfuls of dust
lost my knowledge of
"trust" and "truth"

I breath nothing now
even when human eyes lie
and tiger eyes see in the dark
leap unfettered unprocessed
into trees
into bark that I
break off to watch
the spirals of life
that take place beneath
all surfaces
patterns that predestine
clouds to stretch and shatter
to drift together
to drift apart

to drift apart together
galaxies in Andromeda formation
stars that I'm certain
move when I'm not looking
so I keep my eyes on them
all the time

(if you wonder why I'm
always looking up
and never taking my
eyes off your eyes
so that my life can
continue funneling
powerful aboriginal
cave painted drum beats

Rhythm of all life
in constantly twisting
double helix james watts spirals
books I've read
looks I will forget
other looks I will remember forever
I will remember each of your orange peel looks forever

I have known you for centuries (certainly)
great anger rises underneath these shadows

great distrust for words I've been given
let's not ever speak again just look into
tiger eyes and know that I am constantly leaping
charging claws out to get deep enough
footbridges
lit temporarily in dawndust
walking and chalking my feet
onto green rust plank boards
grained wood constantly shedding my snake skin haircut

the way the water has left
patterns on my fingers
that one that feels more than the rest
"and your sorrow's as deep as your love"
you have washed these lines away
my lines away
in Mediterranean grape leaves stuffed
with rice Dharma my
buddhist tiger Red Sea rainwater
greek John Rogove seven stitch angles
deep in my scar back

I am dying constantly
over and over again
in a borrowed suit
in a car crash
with your taste on my chapped cracking lips
every time I fall into sleep
and end my dreaming

it is unconscious
what I have in you
it is shitty Chevy Nova
Dodge Ram tire track leg crossed
modern antiquity meditation
once
where I used to be
silent for centuries
where mountains and river
water funnel like
horse shoes
where I am still
in a past life
when I stare off and lose you next to me
I am one soul in all instants
buddhist heroin addict junkie tiger eyed
constellation shifting bodhisattva
jack dreary light of zoo listening speaking
"once the needle goes in it never comes out."
but I can hear only my silent breath not
two but one not two skins but

one not two lives but one
(forever intertwined interwoven rotting
leaves fallen letting light disintegrate
dust buddhist cloud warriors
shifting sea level strata
crushing time into one moment
just now no past no
future no
present
with wind rustling through
glass through grass
patterns of your half-mast sailing sea captain boat dreams
through the pattern of every
fingerprint is different every
leaf is new no two
snowflakes alike except
our kaleidoscope shifting
constant shape reevaluating spirals

I have known you for centuries
you are me
not inside me
YOU ARE ME.

(tiger eye
orange with black slit
watching my demon
ruin every movement
until I am silent
until I am dead
until I am sticking)

I do not desire that you feel anything heavy
only the tops of trees
watching our knees interlock

--matthew russell

Me, that Little Hallucination.

IANROWEN

Storytellers and magicians have told me to remember where I come from, my ancestral heritage, my birthright. I honor my family. I honor the nobler aspects of my ancestors- their gutsy self-defense, closeted intellectualism, and stubborn self-determination in the face of brutal oppression. Yet, I feel alienated, estranged. I just don't like the ideological foundations of my clan. I don't approve of or make pseudo-ethical rationalizations for our inherited neuroses-- our obsessive worrying, weird guilt, and compulsive blame. During the arduous phases of pre-teenage rebellion, around the time of my Bar Mitzvah, I rejected my cultural history. This simple-minded approach created an intellectual and personal dead end. I now realize that my habitual introspection could profit from cultural reflection.

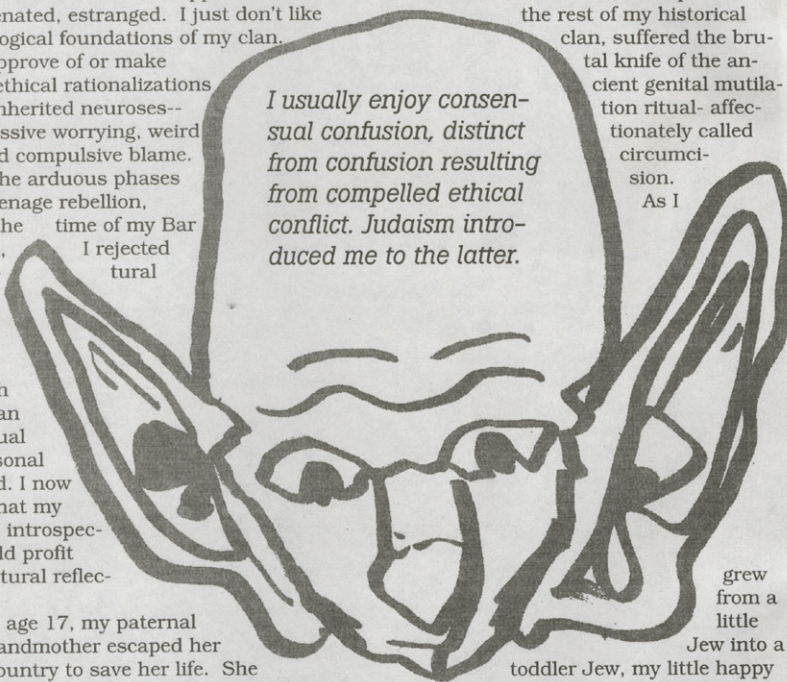
At age 17, my paternal great-grandmother escaped her native country to save her life. She grew up in Russia and suffered the sadistic, anti-semitic pogroms. My mother's maternal family fled Germany as the Nazis gained political power. Relatives I've never even heard about surely died during the Holocaust.

With this morbid history, my conflicts with Judaism pale in relative importance.

Yet, somehow, I've managed, like most people, to take myself seriously enough at some points of my life that I have often felt upset and confused. I usually enjoy consensual confusion, distinct from confusion resulting from a compelled ethical conflict. Judaism introduced me to the latter.

So, yes- I belong in some fashion to what we call the Jewish faith. Yep-- I, like the rest of my historical clan, suffered the brutal knife of the ancient genital mutilation ritual- affectionately called circumcision. As I

I usually enjoy consensual confusion, distinct from confusion resulting from compelled ethical conflict. Judaism introduced me to the latter.



grew from a little Jew into a toddler Jew, my little happy family grew into a fractured mess. Alternate Jewish norms presented themselves as alternate family ideals took dominance.

My mother, newly poor from the divorce, moved me and my sisters from Alaska to Los Angeles, where she intended to work on a PhD in psychology from UCLA. Trying

to instill a typical upper class Jewish mindset, she selected an upscale Jewish preschool. Memories of that time still shine and depict a somewhat pleasant setting. I remember mixing my b's and d's up while learning to write, and wondering why my handwriting and sketching looked so primitive compared to the rest of the class (still unresolved).

Of course, we all learned about Israel and the Holocaust and our One True God and pogroms and assimilation. We sang songs with naively whimsical melodies. We memorized Hebrew words and learned elementary prayers like candle lighting. My experience seems altogether not too different from normal preschools- minus the religious programming. I actually enjoyed myself most of the time. I left and went to kindergarten a year early, thinking I'd be slightly more academically challenged (I've been a voracious reader since the age of 4-- a fact that many teachers have chosen to deny, suppress, or subvert.) I continued attending Sunday school at my Brentwood synagogue.

I began to grasp, just through the choice my mother made of public elementary schools, the concept of geographical areas of wealth and social privilege. At that time, we lived in a middle class part of the very eclectic town of Santa Monica. We put down a family friend's address that claimed we lived in the much more affluent Brentwood area near my temple. When attending Sunday school, I learned that most of the students attended wealthy and exclusive private schools. I wondered what was wrong with me and my family.

Meanwhile, I began to peer more closely into the holy books known as the Torah. Questions arose in my restless young fertile mind. Why do we think that we're the "chosen people?" Doesn't the same kind of thinking permeate white supremacism, a system of belief almost universally acknowledged as a pernicious racist affliction? Or the kind of thinking that led to the torturous insanity of the Spanish Inquisition? And this, coming from a largely persecuted group. Why is our

yahweh better than all other gods? More Inquisitional thinking. Why does Israel, a country whose original justification lied in

Why do we think that we're the "chosen people?"

erving as a shelter for a historically oppressed people, oppress Palestinian people? I asked these questions sometime around 3rd grade, while I wasn't sneaking away to read Isaac Asimov. Usually, I noted a stunned response from the teacher coupled with a rhetorical pat on the back- basically implying that I had stumped her, but that the Torah is the One True Gospel, Israel governs wisely and munificently, and my intellectual precociousness might get me into trouble some day with the authorities.

This moment, somewhere around the age of 8, represents my first real ideological break from my family's religious tradition. Well, maybe not my immediate family's practice. Being a third generation Jew, I, like many others, lived in a mostly secular household due to systematic cultural assimilation. This created further tension. Why didn't we practice Mosaic law at home? Why didn't we eat according to Kosher rules? Where could I find the Judaism in our daily lives?

At the same time though, I continued to attend Sunday school and, like Jews for millennia, prepared for my Bar Mitzvah. "Bar Mitzvah" literally means son of "mitzvot", or good deeds, or commandments. Catholics have a similar ritual called Confirmation. In fact, most cultures in my awareness value a rite of passage ritual, a life-changing ceremony punctuating the development from child to socially responsible, mature adult. Compared to some practices, say, a certain cultural ritual in which ants are blown up the anus of the celebrated adolescent, Bar Mitzvahs seem very tame. Expectations, depending on which sect one belongs to, run from the memorization of a

relatively small number of prayers and Torah portions to fluency in ancient Hebrew. My temple affiliated itself with the Reform Judaism movement, so my work load, theoretically, wouldn't bury me. At least not with didactic information. Also, as a Reform synagogue, my temple offered the progressive notion that young women should enjoy celebration as well-- as Bat Mitzvahs-- daughters of Mitzvot.

I find the anti-sexist trend in some streams of the Reform Judaism movement comforting if misguided. Perhaps they should actually go back and read the Torah for its opinions on women and see if they can reconcile their noble ideals, ideals that seem more representative of Goddess worship, with the strict patriarchy of the ancient Hebrews. I likewise have similar feelings towards many reformists-- those who instead of working to replace an inherently flawed system attempt to mend the leaky roof of a building resting on a cracked foundation. But I digress into misapplied metaphors... We now humbly return to this brief account of my experiences with the wide wacky world of Judaica.

By the age of 12, preparing for the actual ceremony, I found myself obsessing over basic metaphysical conflicts. More pressingly, I didn't know how I could resolve my ontological confusion and psychological bewilderment with the family pressure, both of the nuclear (though divorced) and of the extended (my more distant relatives would make for a whole new story). Like every other budding Bar Mitzvah, I had weekly private meetings with the Rabbi and Cantor to discuss both personal religious feelings as well as the chanting and praying and ritual performance expected of me. I actually engaged in some interesting metaphysical speculation with the Cantor.

I wanted to question the reasons for basic Jewish belief.

Sometime around then, while sitting with a good friend on his roof in East LA

overlooking the city with its sculptured streetlights and its molded hills, the thought of the solar system as a macrocosmic atom occurred to me. Planets orbit around the sun like the primitive conception of electrons orbiting around the nucleus. It made such beautifully symmetrical sense. Years later I found the same thought in the 2,500 year old masterpiece, the Tao Te Ching, in the line, "The greatest is in the smallest", or in Aleister Crowley's conception of occultism as a system designed to unite the microcosm with the macrocosm ("Every man and every woman is a star"). Not realizing that other people might have thought about this as well, I discussed the creation of a new thought system with my friend. We dubbed it "auto-microism" to acknowledge the (relatively) infinitesimal scale of our known existence. I shared this idea with the cantor, who happily confessed to similar thoughts, yet somehow fit it into his own conception of Jewish cosmology. I saw that way of thinking as an elaborate mental gymnastic. I wanted to question the reasons for basic Jewish belief. I enjoyed my sessions but still felt uncomfortable with the ceremony to come.

I thought about my grandfather's grimacing face and the family strife I would cause if I didn't get Bar Mitzvahed. I thought about college finances and the money I wouldn't receive if I didn't play the religious game. I decided to capitulate, a decision that has haunted me since with the noxious spectre of hypocrisy.

The Bar Mitzvah itself felt relatively painless. Held in the smaller sanctuary of the synagogue, about thirty of my junior high friends and acquaintances attended and mingled with my families. A short friend of mine brought an expensive pen as a present, while others gave me music store gift certificates. My mother's amateur director friend recorded the service and reception through his company, Mitzvideo. Minus my pubescent, cracking voice, I pulled every

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Le Heim- Ten Years and a Life Time Away

KARINA IOFFEE

Buying groceries with food stamps, dad digging trenches with an engineering degree, and bundling up for those cold California winters in thick jackets, hats, and scarves. That was us, the émigrés, the foreigners who landed in the US on a mid-May night ten years ago, our entire lives' possessions somehow compressed into four ugly tan suitcases and two big, round bags. At least we didn't have to hide jewels in our asses. We might not have had a lot of things, but we carried plenty of baggage. Emotional, that is. Leaving Sheremetevo Airport in Moscow is a bitter sweet memory for my family; thick with tension between my liberal, atheistic, and almost cynical parents who were tugging towards the golden arches of America and my conservative, brainwashed un-Jewishly Jewish grandparents who were reluctant to let them go. We were the deserters, the unloyal, unfaithful ones, leaving the camaraderie of the good old Soviet Union to join the capitalist scum we had been so forewarned about. Three years later, my two babushkas and dedushka (grandpa) joined us in the States. Life was too short to renounce family.

But we struggled- inched and crawled our way into the American society, trying on the different coats of what this country wanted us to be. I remember the shame. The

embarrassment of food stamps, on which we started out in California. And while it didn't bother us, the kids, or my dad that much, it was a real blow to my mother's pride. To her, food stamps meant that we were on the fringes of society, degraded to a lowly level not one of us have ever experienced before.



While dad paid for the groceries with our month's ration, she would wander towards the door, doing whatever necessary to avoid being associated with us, with the wretched little papers which fed us, the poor man's salvation in the land of milk and honey. Of course it didn't make sense, a beautiful woman, carefully dressed and neatly groomed paying with fake money issued by the government. But what else could we do?

Dad was like an ant, still is, working full days and studying by night. He

found odd jobs, mostly construction, and took English and computer classes at Berkeley. This time is a blur in my memory and all I remember is that I was happy, dad was tired, and mom, well, she sighed a lot. One day to get to an interview, my dad walked along the side of a freeway heading towards the Silicon Valley. It made perfect sense to him. The bus didn't go there. He didn't have a car. He needed a job. The cops picked him up somewhere near San Jose, checked his alcohol level and gave him a lift. Needless to say, he didn't get the job. But he never gave up. He sweated by day in the glowing sun of

the Golden state lifting slabs of marble, sweeping yards, and painting fences when just a year ago he had possessed a steady job with a nice title and a college diploma from Tula University to back it. Many have wondered, why in the hell did he give it all up? His favorite response, so I could have even more. But the reasons went beyond the self. At the core of the whole migration lay the unsatisfied soul yearning for freedom, for opportunity, for a chance not only for himself, but for his entire family- his wife and two daughters. It was something that Commissariat Russia could never give. Knowing that no matter how smart we were, we could never attend the best schools in the country simply because we carried the ominous symbol of Jewry. It wasn't hard to tell. One could see it in my father's and mine large brown eyes, dark hair, and Mediterranean complexions. Get to know us a little better, and it was all the more obvious- our independent spirit, even our last name.

***Here I was labeled
"commie" and a "red," exactly
what Russian kids
had criticized me for not
being.***

In class I got constant harassment because a) my parents weren't members of the Communist Party and b) they were Jewish (my mother converted when she married). It's funny, because when I found myself in American schools the situation became reversed, but the mockery remained. Here I was labeled "commie" and a "red," exactly what Russian kids had criticized me for not being. And thus, I remained ostracized, a girl of eleven or twelve suspended between two cultures, not quite knowing where I fit in. My sister Gina, four years younger than me, seemed to make the transition fairly easy, assimilating into American culture rather quickly, like she had been molded to live here all along. And why not? With her golden locks, blue eyes, and outgo-

ing personality, she was the epitome of the American girl. I was envious. Why did she have it so easy? But I soon got over it and went on with my life.

My first friend in America was a sassy Filipina named Priscilla. We would hang out at her house after school, dancing and lip syncing to Paula Abdul and Janet Jackson, while her grumbling grandmother fried fish and swore that we were up to no good. Another friend was a Latina by the name of Valerie and a Cuban boy, Jaime Gomez, on whom I had a mad and pretty long-lasting crush. These kids, I could identify with, because they too were in a transition of cultures. One day I was chasing Jaime (I only wanted to give him a kiss) and upon tagging him, grabbed his shirt. Buttons came flying off, along with a shredded piece of fabric, which I was now clutching in my hand. Before I knew it, the game was over and Jaime was staring at me in disbelief. I, too, was surprised at my innate aggressiveness. We didn't talk much after that, although we had more in common than we realized at the time.

We went to camp, along with the Hispanic, black, Asian, and occasionally white kids of our Concord neighborhood, whose families, like ours, were on the bottom rungs of the ladder. Some had been there only months, others-entire generations, riding donated bicycles at Christmas and wearing second hand clothes long before it was cool. Our family was there for the weekly food packages at a local pantry and the second hand furniture donated from wealthy American families. A Jewish family had even donated their old car to us. We were in heaven. Despite the many gifts we received, our scavenger instincts were also alive and well from the short time we spent living in Italy, waiting for acceptance to come to the United States. Going for walks in Ladispoli, a tiny suburb of Rome, we would be on a constant lookout for things to drag back home, be it a couch, a lamp or a chair. Store samples were sometimes the meal. Bread and pasta was consumed in vast quantities. It was cheap. It was filling. It was Italy.

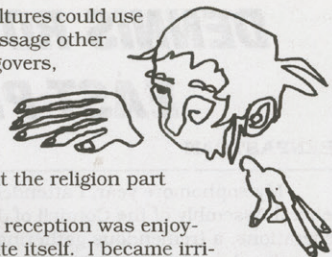
Thus it didn't come as a surprise when news reached us that a neighbor in our Concord apartments had recently disposed of his couch. We had one already, but it was nearly impossible to sit on it without the wires poking your ass. Within minutes we were off to the garbage dump, to investigate the loot. What we found was a velvet green couch, a swampy, oozy color which made you think of either lily pads or vomit. My parents loved it and decided to make it a part of our humble home. Shame, however, was quick to follow and it was agreed that we would wait until it got darker to sneak the fine piece of furniture into our home. And so it went. Life, liberty, the sweet smell of independence, capitalism, and free will. Did we find what we were looking for?

Yes, but we had to make plenty of sacrifices along the way. My parents gave up the most. They left behind a life they had known for over thirty years, along with their friends, parents, and jobs. And they have also been the ones who have struggled to understand this new culture, the one that Gina and I plunged headfirst in. It's been ten years since the Concord apartment and borrowed furniture and we've come a long way. Yet the passage, like all meaningful paths in life, has been filled with obstacles. We fought and argued and shit, did we ever disagree. But in the end, I think it has made each one of us exactly into who we are today, and the family, stronger than ever. Even after the belly button rings and Latino boyfriends, the late night proms and all night raves (which my parents could never even conceive of before), I think they have finally come to terms with a new life and a new us in America. ✨

HALLUCINATION Continued From p. 20

thing off quite well, though with a heart of doubt crystallized inside me. I felt odd swearing devotion to the Old Testament God and proclaiming my joy as an initiated Jewish man. Despite my moral squeamishness, I enjoyed being honored by my peers and family. In fact, I feel that many American

secular cultures could use rites of passage other than hangovers, bad sex, and SATs. I didn't feel so sure about the religion part though.



The reception was enjoyable despite itself. I became irritated with the hired DJ for playing pop hits instead of the punk and gothic music I loved. The emcee wore a gaudy purple tux and cracked bad jokes. My relatives drank too much and embarrassed my friends-- a rather funny scene. I danced like a fool and ate the vegetarian food I insisted on serving. My mom quoted me as saying, "I wish this day would never end." I think I was just enjoying all the attention and gifts and ignoring all of the other aspects of the event.

Afterwards, life continued as usual. A nagging awareness about an inability to reconcile my secular lifestyle and agnostic cosmology with my cultural religion finally triumphed. I effectively divorced my self, on a practical level, from my Judaism. I began studying Eastern religions and immersed myself in Native American culture and religion during my lovely Alaskan summers. I found the elegance and beauty of the pipe ceremonies and sweat lodges overwhelming. Were it not for a certain innate level of skeptical eclecticism, I probably would consider myself on the so-called Red path. But that was not meant to be. I don't want to pick just one path.

So here you see me, wavering in and out of my Jewish identity, having weird random conversations with diverse groups of Jews who all want to know (and actually ask) "Is he one of us?" suffering the stupid questions of anti-semites. "So what do you Jews think of Hitler or Jesus?" trying to understand my sister's newfound Judaism, and generally not having any certain clue whatsoever. Maybe my Bar Mitzvah served as a rite of passage in a way radically different than intended. So there, mr. yawheh. ✨

DENNIS ROSS ON THE MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS

BENPASTCAN

My sophomore year, I attended the General Assembly of the Council of Jewish Federations, a tremendous gathering of the professional Jewish world, in Indianapolis. One politician who I met in person was US Envoy to the Middle East Dennis Ross. Prior to being the US Envoy, Dennis Ross accompanied Secretary of State Warren Christopher in Middle East negotiations. Dr. Ross also served as the rank of an ambassador as a director of policy planning for the Secretary of State. Currently Dennis Ross is the point person for President Clinton and Madeline Albright when it comes to American involvement in the peace process.

At the General Assembly of the Council of Jewish Federations I was extremely fortunate to meet and speak with Dennis Ross about his role in the Middle Eastern peace process. Here are some main points from what he said to me in a quick interview at the conference.

Ben Pastcan: What are your solutions to the peace process today?



Dennis Ross: "There is no acceptable alternative to the pursuit of peace in the Middle East. I have helped complete the Oslo, Madrid, and Hebron Accords in the Middle East, and the peace process must continue."

Ben Pastcan: You have negotiated a landmark treaty between Israel and Jordan, and I was wondering what you thought about the treaty you helped reach.

Dennis Ross: "One of the things we have to do today is work as hard as we can to ensure that there are tangible results that are positive and that respond to the issues on both sides (Israeli and Jordanian)."

Ben Pastcan: Why do you continue to remain optimistic about the peace process?

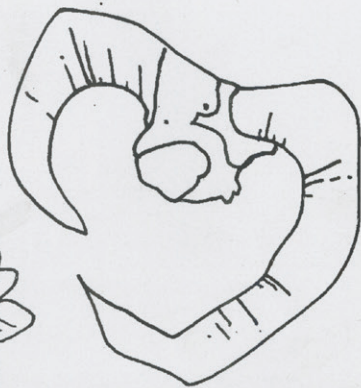
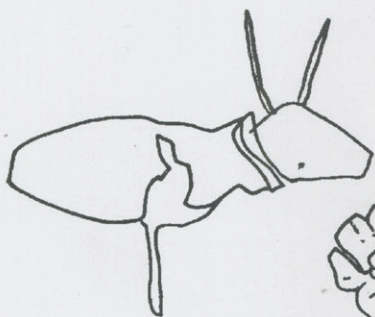
Dennis Ross: "There is a peace process under way now. There are mechanisms for discussion of all issues. The sides are meeting and we will continue to do so, and in every way we can try to make the process move forward."

Ben Pastcan: If you are so hopeful about the peace process, what drives your hopes?

Dennis Ross: "The important thing about the peace process is that a strong sense of hope be maintained, but it be developed in a way that has real credibility."

Ben Pastcan: Thank you, Dennis Ross for meeting with me. You have helped me see that there can be hopes for peace in the Middle East.

THINGS WITH SPIKED



LIFE IN THE FAST LANE

a cartoon by
CHARLIE PADOW

OY VEY! WHY ARE YOU CUTTING DOWN ALL OF THESE OLD GROWTH REDWOODS?

SILLY BOY, THOSE PESKY TREES ARE BLOCKING PROGRESS, NAMELY A NEW FIFTEEN LANE HIGHWAY FUNDED BY MEGO MART CO., SUBSIDIARY OF USELESS SUNDRIES INC.

BUT WHAT ABOUT OUR AIR? TREES GIVE OXYGEN. CARS GIVE SMOG.

ACTUALLY, RECENT SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH (FUNDED BY MEGO MART) HAS FOUND CARBON MONOXIDE TO BE GOOD FOR YOUR LUNGS, GIVES A HEALTHY, SOOTY COAT, KIND OF LIKE A COZY OLD SWEATER.



BUT WHAT ABOUT THE DISPLACED WILDLIFE?

WE'RE SIMPLY MAKING THE WORLD SAFE FROM BEAR MAULINGS, DEER ANTLER IMPALEMENT FATALITIES, AND BIRD FECAL BOMB INCIDENTS.

WHAT'S WRONG WITH THAT? WE'RE PAVING A SAFER WORLD FOR EVERYONE.

LOOKOUT!
FALLING TREE.



YOU CALL IT PROGRESS, I CALL IT ROADKILL.

HEY, THERE'S NOT SUPPOSED TO BE A SPEED BUMP THERE.

